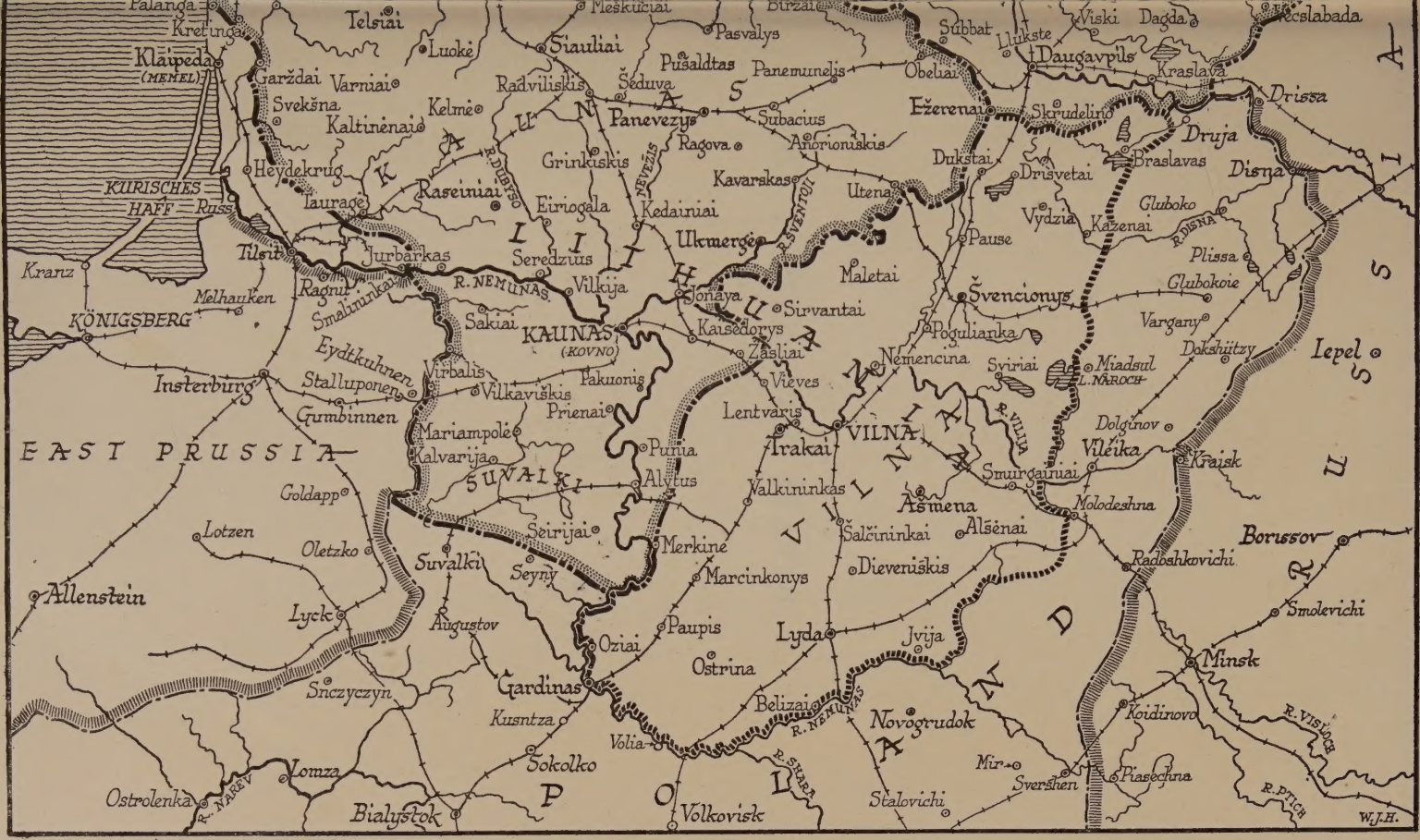

Palanga
Kretinga
Klaipeda
(MEMEL)
Garždai
Svekšna
Telsiai
Luokė
Varniai
Kaltinėnai
Kelmė
Heydekrug
KURISCHES HAFF
Russ
Tauragė
Raseiniai
Tilsit
Jurbarkas
Kranz
Ragnit
Melhauken
KÖNIGSBERG
Smalininkai
Eydtkuhnen
Stalluponen
Insterburg
Gumbinnen
Virbalis
Vilkaviškis
Mariampolė
Kalvarija
EAST PRUSSIA
Goldapp
Lotzen
Oletzko
Allenstein
Lyck
Suvalki
Augustov
Snczyczyn
Lomza
Ostrolenka
R. NAREV
Bialystok
Sokolko
Kusntza
Gardinas
Oziai
Volia
Volkovisk
Seirijai
Seyny
Merkine
Marcinkonys
Paupis
Ostrina
Belizai
R. NEMUNAS
Novogrudok
Lyda
Jvija
Mir
Svershen
Stalovichi
Piasechna
Koidinovo
Minsk
Smolevichi
Radoshkovichi
Borissov
Molodeshna
Vileika
Kraisk
Dolginov
Iepel
Dokshiitzy
Vargany
Glubokoie
Plissa
Gluboko
Kazenai
Vydzia
Pause
Švencionys
Poguliankа
Nemencina
Sviriai
Miadsul
L. NAROCH
Dukstai
Drisvetai
Braslavas
Druja
Disna
Drissa
Kraslava
Daugavpils
Viski
Dagda
Subbat
Obeliai
Ežerenai
Skrudelino
Panemunelis
Subacius
Anorioniskis
Utena
Maletai
Sirvantai
Kaisedorys
Žasliai
Vieves
Lentvaris
Trakai
VILNA
Valkininkas
Šalčininkai
Dieveniškis
Ašmena
Alšėnai
Smurgainiai
Ukmergė
Kavarskas
Ragova
Panevezys
Pusaldtas
Šeduva
Siauliai
Meškučiai
Pasvalys
Radviliskis
Grinkiskis
Eiriogala
Kedainiai
Seredzius
Vilkija
Jonaya
Sakiai
KAUNAS
(KOVNO)
Pakuonis
Prienai
Punia
Alytus
Merkine
Paupis
Ostrina
Lyda
Ašmena
Dieveniškis
Svirvantai
Kaunas
Lithuania
Suvalki
Kaunas
Lithuania
Vilna
Poland
Russia
R. DUBYSO
NEVEŽIS
R. SVENTOJI
R. DISNA
R. VILIJA
R. NEMUNAS
R. SHARA
R. VISLOCH
R. PTICH
W.J.H.

# THE NEW BALTIC STATES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE SONG OF TIADATHA

THE TRAVELS OF TIADATHA

BRITISH NORTH BORNEO

THROUGH FORMOSA

THE DRAGON OF KINABULU

In collaboration with Major Desmond Chapman-Huston

SIR JOHN COWANS, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., THE QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL OF THE GREAT WAR

THE HOUSE OF THE BLACKHEADS, TALLINN

# THE NEW BALTIC STATES

## AND THEIR FUTURE

AN ACCOUNT OF LITHUANIA, LATVIA AND ESTONIA

BY

OWEN RUTTER

F.R.G.S., F.R.A.I.

WITH TWENTY-FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP

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TO

BRIGADIER-GENERAL ALFRED BURT

C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., A.M.

THE GODFATHER OF THE BALTIC STATES

IN GRATITUDE AND ADMIRATION

# PREFACE

ALTHOUGH my visit to the Baltic States was in no sense "officially conducted," I am under a deep obligation to the Governments of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia for their courtesy and generous ssistance during my stay in their countries, and I must lso record my gratitude to their people, who, although I vas a total stranger to them, made me welcome wherever chanced to go.

To General Alfred Burt, who has championed the cause f these new Republics, I owe my warmest thanks for his ympathetic interest in this book, and also to Mr. E. J. Harrison, of the Lithuanian Legation; to Mr. E. Birin, the Latvian Chargé d'Affaires and Consul-General in London; nd to His Excellency Dr. Oskar Kallas, the Estonian Minister in London. Thanks to their help, I think I may laim that the facts here presented are accurate: my pinions, on the other hand, are my own, and for them I lone am responsible. When I have felt it necessary to riticize I have tried to do so as an impartial observer nor, n criticizing, have I forgotten that it is unfair to judge hese countries, which are rising from devastation to rosperity, by the standards of countries whose history has been happier than their own.

O. R.

THE CROFT, WARGRAVE,
*March*, 1925.

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NOTE.—Except where otherwise acknowledged the above illustrations are from photographs by the author.

Do thou, great liberty, inspire our souls,
And make our lives in thy possession happy,
Or our deaths glorious in thy just defence.

ADDISON.

# THE NEW BALTIC STATES

## CHAPTER I

## TOWARDS THE BALTIC

Why I went to the Baltic States—The tragedy with a happy ending—Bibles as contraband—Liberty at last—Friendly feeling for England—Linoleum for Polish corridors—Customs trials—A bluff that paid—The friendly American—First impressions of Lithuania—The fertile countryside—Lithuanian geography—Kaunas, the makeshift capital—A town with an unhappy history—In the footsteps of Napoleon—Types in Liberty Avenue—A new profession—A living War Memorial—The Cross and the pagan altar—An inspiring ceremony—The noble brotherhood.

### § 1

THE impulse to write this book came to me one summer afternoon in a Knightsbridge drawing-room.

I had been sent a card of invitation "to meet the Ministers of the Baltic States." I knew just enough about the Baltic States not to confuse them with the Balkans (as I found some of my friends did) and to realize that they were not (as others seemed to think) part of Russia. But I knew little more than that, and so, having a questing mind, I accepted the invitation and went to that At Home.

I went expecting to obtain a little mild information about the three new republics of which I was so lamentably ignorant, but I was not prepared for what I heard. I learnt that the story of the peoples who live on the fringe of the Baltic Sea is a tragedy that is having a happy ending. At the time when our Magna Charta was signed all liberty was lost to them. For centuries they lived under a foreign yoke, their own ideals, literature and languages suppressed yet never dying. They were isolated from Western Europe

and cut off from all possibilities of education. The most dangerous contraband on the Lithuanian frontiers was never tobacco or spirits but prayer books in the Lithuanian tongue. Their struggle (for struggle they did) was not for economic or political freedom, but for that freedom which is the primitive right of all human beings. They wished, as Doctor Oskar Kallas, the Minister for Estonia, declared, to think as their brains were created to think, to feel as their hearts instinctively felt, to speak the language that came most readily to their tongues.

All through those bitter years, however, the Baltic peoples preserved their own individuality and their own aspirations. For nearly eight hundred years they waited on for liberty, and they did not wait in vain. That afternoon General Alfred Burt, who, as head of the British Mission to the Baltic States, has done so much for these countries that he is come to be regarded as their godfather, described how the victory of the Allies had made it possible for their dreams to come true—not at once indeed but after incredible struggles, and largely thanks to the Allied Mission and the American Red Cross Commission which helped them to carry out their work of reconstruction in the republics they had so recently proclaimed.

And they had little enough upon which to build. The war had left their countries devastated, impoverished, depopulated and, since they had always been underdogs, they had few men of affairs to tackle the problems with which they were confronted—problems that might well have daunted statesmen and administrators of mature experience.

Yet it seemed that it was being done. They had drunk of freedom and were not intoxicated. Slowly, in spite of setbacks and inevitable difficulties, they were prospering. The right men had come forward as, at such times, men do. Their independence was recognized. Their Governments were stable and organized. The people themselves, once landless, were now a race of farmers, and content. Their currency was on a gold basis. More than that, their budgets balanced.

General Burt spoke of the profound feeling of friend-

ship among the Governments of the new republics towards Great Britain and the United States, and of their desire for co-operation. He mentioned that by law English was the first foreign language taught in the schools. And this friendly feeling was, he said, passionately shared by the people themselves. That impressed me most of all. The love of a Government may often be cupboard love, but in the heart of a people you will find the truth. And when the General described how a deputation of peasants had, unheralded, marched into a house where he was staying to thank him, as representative of his country, for all that England had done for them, it appeared that this affection was genuine and not assumed.

All this filled me with a desire to see for myself the conditions in the Baltic States. The story of their achievement after all those years of waiting seemed as moving as an epic of great deeds, and its sequel not a little sad. For here were three little countries which, now free to determine their own affairs, had their eyes turned gratefully towards the English-speaking race, the majority of whom knew nothing of their struggles or their victory, and indeed hardly realized their existence.

In this world friends, whether they be human beings or nations, are not so plentiful that one can afford to estrange them through indifference, and so I determined, as I went thoughtfully away from that At Home, that if it were possible I would go and see these countries for myself, find out what their people were thinking, what they were doing and what they hoped to do, and, by trying to form an impartial opinion of their successes and their failures (for, of course, they had failed in some things), help to make them better known to the nations they had come to look upon as friends.

I was fortunate enough to find the Ministers of the three republics in sympathy with my ideas and prepared to give me all the help they could. I was no less fortunate in finding a publisher who was not under the impression that the Baltic States were in the heart of Russia (books on which country are supposed to be anathema to the British

Public), and so it happened that some months later I passed through the Hook of Holland and Berlin bound for Lithuania, to see and judge for myself, as an independent observer with no axe to grind, the condition of the Baltic States.

§ 2

Leaving Berlin by the evening train (in a sleeper in no way equal to those by which one may travel from London to Scotland) one passes by night through the Polish Corridor, the narrow strip, fifteen miles wide, that runs north to Danzig. I was told that had we passed through by day the blinds of the carriages would have been drawn and we should not have been allowed to open or even look out of the windows—such is the inscrutable vigilance of the Polish police. In Berlin they were saying that the best possible investment was linoleum shares, because the Poles would soon be requiring vast quantities to lay down their corridors.

One's first experience in Lithuania is essentially tedious. Customs ritual is tedious anywhere, but in the Baltic States more so than in most countries. Having passed through the Customs at Eydtkuhnen, on the German side of the frontier—the old frontier between Germany and Russia—at eight in the morning, one enters another train and reaches Virbalis (Wirballen)* a few minutes later. Here the whole dreary customs business begins again.

I had found the German Customs officers courteous and business-like, though officious—as a fellow-traveller remarked to me, it was their last chance. The only thing they really look for is money: one may not take out a sum larger than £20 unless it has been declared. Going into Germany it is different, of course, and not more than twenty-five cigarettes are allowed, although I heard a story of an Englishman from Riga who had successfully got through with a case of twenty thousand. The Customs officer, who spoke French for the Englishman's benefit, eyed the case suspiciously and asked:

* The Baltic Republics have made their own place-names official. These are given first in the text with the more familiar German or Russian names in brackets.

"Qu'est ce qu'il y a dedans ça ?"

"Vingt mille cigarettes," replied the traveller, truthfully but with a jocular air.

"Quelle blague, monsieur," laughed the officer, and passed on.

At Virbalis, however, the Customs officials were less courteous than at Eydtkuhnen, more numerous and more officious. The police collected our passports—I always hated parting with mine, but I was to get used to it before I had done with the Baltic States—and we had to leave the train with our baggage. It was at this stage that I became thankful that I had resolved to bring with me nothing that I could not carry. Before I started, a couple of suit-cases for a two-months' trip had not seemed over much, but they carried all I needed and I soon realized that the trials of a traveller with heavy luggage in the Baltic States would be unending.

The actual baggage examination was cursory, though the examiner (whose hands were none too clean) pounced upon a parcel containing a new towel in the bag of an American standing next to me and mauled it, in spite of the owner's protests. Then we waited in the crowd for our passports, which another official held, calling out the names in turn. It reminded me of call-over at school, though instead of "Adsum" came cries of "Bitte" or "Hier" as the owners stretched out their hands. It all seemed rather a farce, since no attempt was made to prove identity.

Then came a long wait before we were allowed back in the train, and we filtered into the Refreshment Room. By this time I had struck up an acquaintance with the American whose towel had been mauled. He explained that he was going from Berlin to Riga for the night and that he always carried his own towels in the Baltic States. I perceived him to be a man of the world. He had his headquarters in Paris, stayed at the Berkeley when he was in London, and spent his time travelling. He had an uncanny knowledge of every Customs station in Europe, and his passport, which he showed me, seemed to have as many pages as a novel by William de Morgan.

I think that the world may be divided into two classes—the people who talk to fellow-travellers and the people who don't. Personally I confess to numbering myself with the first. One of the most dreadful things in life is to sit opposite a man in a restaurant-car and to swallow your food without uttering a word. I always make a point of talking to people in trains, for thus may one obtain an insight into the life of people with whom one would not ordinarily come in contact. Strangers will tell you secrets in railway carriages that they would not breathe to their dearest friends, knowing that in all probability they will never see you again. There is no anticlimax about a travelling friendship. It is what poets call a fragment. And the chief trouble about life is that things go on so.

Anyhow, when we reached the Refreshment Room at Virbalis I was glad I had spoken to the American, for he became a friend in need. My departure from the Hotel Bristol at Berlin had been more costly than I had anticipated (no one ever left an hotel with as much money as he expected to, in spite of the most generous calculations) so that until I got to a bank I was reduced to a sum that was barely enough for porters' tips. Wistfully I watched my friend ordering coffee and eggs at the buffet, trying to persuade myself I wasn't hungry. Finally hunger overcame my discretion, and putting from me a vision of untipped and outraged porters I fell to on egg sandwiches and beer. Recklessness often has its rewards, for when the waiter came my new friend, having found some Lithuanian money, insisted on paying for us both. I protested, a little weakly, but not altogether hypocritically. I felt that he might say, "I don't mind this fellow not paying, but I do expect him to fumble."

At last, after an altercation with a Lithuanian ticket collector who wanted to make me buy a fast train ticket when I had already shown it to him, we got back to our carriage, having taken two hours and twelve minutes to pass through the combined German and Lithuanian Customs examinations, the last of which might just as well have been made on the train as it is on the Dutch-German frontier at Bentheim.

Such small irritations were soon forgotten, however, as we entered Lithuania. One's first impressions of the countryside are pleasant enough: low undulating fields of ripening corn, groups of haymakers, the women and girls barefooted with white cloths about their heads; a pensive and solitary stork; log farmsteads with thatched roofs—a contrast to the more modern but less picturesque brick and tiles on the German side; parties digging peat from the bogs; and beyond the hedgeless fields dark belts of pine and fir.

Lithuania is a land of plains—the highest peak of its two ranges, the Lithuanian Hills and the Telsiai Heights,* does not reach a thousand feet. Its fertile lowlands, once covered by a vast tract of virgin forest, the paradise of the hunter, are broken by hundreds of lakes and expanses of less lovely swamps, which together form 4 per cent of its total area. Its great waterway is the Nemunas (Niemen) which, gathering a network of tributaries from the north and south as it goes, enters the Baltic Sea below Klaipeda (Memel) through many mouths.

At Kaunas (Kovno), some hundred miles from its mouth, the Nemunas is joined by the Vilija (Neris) on which Vilna,† the ancient capital of Lithuania stands. The Nemunas itself rises to the south-east of Vilna and flows due west until it reaches Gardinas (Grodno) where it makes a right-angle bend and turns its course north until it reaches Kaunas, whence it flows westward to the sea. Under the Lithuanian-Russian Treaty of July 12, 1920, the upper course of the river formed the south-eastern boundary between Lithuania and Poland, but since then the Poles have encroached, so that the present territory of the Republic is in shape not unlike a miniature Africa. Vilna has been occupied and some ten thousand square miles of territory have been cut off, until southern Lithuania is become like a walnut between two crackers—Poland on the east and East Prussia on the west.

On the north the frontier runs with Latvia and on the

* The Lithuanian s is pronounced like our sh in shadow.
† The Lithuanian form is Vilnius; the Polish Wilno.

west, between Latvia and Prussia, Lithuania sets, as it were, her two lips on the Baltic. After having to be content with twelve miles of seaboard in the neighbourhood of Palanga, she has increased them to over sixty, and secured a port as well, now that the Conference of Ambassadors has handed over the Klaipeda Territory, otherwise known as Lithuanian Minor, which, until the inhabitants took the law into their own hands, was administered by a French Commission in the name of the Allies. Excluding this territory, which is an autonomous unit of eleven hundred square miles under the Republic, the area remaining to Lithuania is twenty thousand square miles—three times the size of Wales, with a population of just over two million (about equal to that of Denmark), over 80 per cent of which is agricultural.

§ 3

Having lost Vilna (temporarily as they believe) the Lithuanians have perforce made Kaunas their capital. It is one of those towns which have honour thrust upon them. It was never intended to be a European capital and it wears its distinction as uneasily as a coster would wear a coronet. It is not worthy of the name city and, frankly, it is filthy. It has no drainage and no water supply—the prudent traveller cleans his teeth in local mineral water—and its only modern convenience is electric light. Until vast sums are spent upon it, it cannot be anything more than it was before the war, a typical Russian garrison town. Moreover, its hotels are the worst in the Baltic States. On the other hand, one has to remember that the Russians, not the Lithuanians, are responsible for the inferior state of the town, and that the present Government is now trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, and this, too, after the ravages of a hostile occupation.

My American friend had recommended me to stay at the Metropole, and thither I drove from the station, along streets paved with cobbles like large potatoes, in a drosky—there are no taxis in Kaunas. On my arrival at the Metropole, now officially called the Grand though still universally known by the no less high-sounding name it bore in the

Russian days, I found a Lithuanian porter, with a pate that was shaved cleaner than his chin, who spoke English and French. From him I discovered that my room was to cost me 30 lits—the equivalent of 15s., the Lithuanian lita being one-tenth of an American dollar and roughly equivalent to sixpence. This was nearly double what I had been paying at the Bristol in Berlin, and I protested. The price was then reduced to 23 lits. Some time later I suggested to the Lithuanian Foreign Office that it was a pity foreigners should be imposed upon as soon as they set foot in the capital, and the price of that room was further reduced to 15 lits.

I soon found that, in spite of its disadvantages as a capital, Kaunas has much in it to interest the passing traveller. It is a town with an unhappy history. Lying as it does on the high road to the East it has been bathed in the blood of its Lithuanian defenders, and it is said to have been burnt thirteen times. Napoleon passed through it on his ill-fated march to Moscow : one may still see the house in which he lodged and above the town is a mount called Napoleon's Hill, where he watched his army file past him. Like Bath, Kaunas lies, as it were, at the bottom of a cup of hills. These natural defences the Russians spent some eight millions in elaborating, girdling the town with a chain of sixteen fortresses, which were reduced by the invading Germans in a few days.

The town is dominated by the Church of St. Peter and Paul, an imposing building in the conventional Byzantine style. It serves as a useful landmark to the traveller who has not yet learnt his way about, since it faces Liberty Avenue, as the main street has been renamed, and three other roads lead into its square. Like Kaunas itself, it has had its vicissitudes. It was built as the Russian Garrison Church. During the war it became the Protestant Church for the German Army of occupation, and now it is the Lithuanian Military Church, and Roman Catholic.

Far more interesting and more beautiful, and with no less chequered history, is the Catholic church of Vytautas, a glorious example of red brick Lithuanian Gothic, on the

banks of the Nemunas. It is the oldest of the many churches in Kaunas and dates back to the fifteenth century. In 1831 it was taken over by the Russians as an Orthodox Church, and during the occupation the Germans used it as a store. Now it is Roman Catholic once again.

In the days before the war, the Russian Government would allow no houses to be built on the hills round the town and none over two stories in the town itself, lest they should present a target for artillery. Now, however, there is considerable activity going on and many new houses are being built, though accommodation in Kaunas is likely to remain inadequate for several years.

The low buildings give the streets a squat appearance. In Liberty Avenue the small-windowed shops (all carefully shuttered and barred at night) are fronted by stone pavement, and down the centre of the cobbled roadway runs a broad walk shaded by lime trees and flanked by wooden benches. This is an admirable arrangement both for pedestrians and vehicles, for the stream of traffic flows in different directions on the right and on the left, though to turn it is necessary, as in Berlin, to go to the end of a block. In Kaunas there is no traffic problem, for one rarely sees a motor-car; the clatter of hoofs and drosky wheels over the cobbles takes the place of humming engines and the only other public conveyances are dilapidated and overcrowded trams (was there ever a tram that was not overcrowded ?), each pulled by a single horse that looks as though it had been thrown together in handfuls.

There are plenty of interesting types to be found in this Unter den Linden of Kaunas: barefooted peasant women, their hair hidden under white or coloured cloths, carrying baskets filled with fruit; priests, hideously shaven-headed in the German fashion like many others of the male community, in long black cassocks and bowlers or panamas; cavalry officers clanking along in baggy wine-coloured breeches; policemen in light blue, with helmets that look like surplus topis dyed to match the uniform—the Force was modelled by a pro-English Lithuanian Chief of Police and I noticed the numerals on their collars were identical

A LITHUANIAN WEIGHING MACHINE

LIBERTY AVENUE, KAUNAS
Showing the Russian Church

with ours, but not the revolvers at their sides. Then there are sallow-faced Jews; bearded Russians; pretty girls, with the characteristic Lithuanian blue eyes and fair hair, many curiously English in type, often well dressed but sometimes wearing socks that leave an expanse of bare calf—a modern, not a national, fashion and one which, who knows, may reach us yet.

As I strolled along, glad of the lime trees' shade, for in Lithuania the sun is strong in July, I stopped to watch the local fire-engine, a barrel-like affair with a hose attached and the firemen resplendent in brass helmets—another testimony, I imagine, of the English sympathies of that Chief of Police. A few paces farther on I came upon a strange sight: a woman with a weighing-machine. I sat down on a bench near by, waiting for a chance to take a photograph, and while I watched several people came to occupy her chair, so that even at the modest sum of a halfpenny a time this novel method of earning a living must be fairly lucrative. I commend it to any pavement artist rendered desperate by our uncertain climate. It would not be difficult to fix an umbrella over the seat on wet days and, once a pitch was found well away from blackleg penny-in-the-slot machines, a very snug little business could be built up with regular clients.

The many Jews one passes in the streets of Kaunas are a strange contrast to the fair Lithuanians. The town has a large Jewish quarter, in fact out of a population of 120,000 no less than half are Jews, the restless energy of whose race has done much to help the trade revival of the Baltic States. Near the quarter is a large square where the main market is held twice a week. All round the square are the shops of the Jews, who sell chiefly hardware and cheap clothing; fronting the shops are the booths of the country people who bring in their fruit and eggs and vegetables, while the centre of the square forms a convenient park for the long Lithuanian carts. The Kaunas market is the meeting-place of Jew and Gentile and, though there is no love lost between the two, trade brings them together.

Not far from the market-place, and near the Cathedral

and the City Hall, is the Town Museum, which is open only for four hours two days a week. I found it closed, but thanks to the good offices of a Lithuanian journalist friend the curator was discovered sitting on a bench outside. He received the suggestion that he should open the Museum rather sourly until it transpired that I came from London, when his manner changed and he professed himself ready to show us anything we wished. The Museum, however, is not specially interesting. For instance, not a single example of a full Lithuanian costume could I find, though there were a certain number of garments hung up in cases, and no examples of arts and crafts such as weaving; I looked for some specimens of Lithuanian amber in vain. In fact, the Museum's only exhibit of outstanding interest is a picture of the Crucifixion, said to be an original Rubens; the authorities are fortunate that it was not stolen during the war, either by the retreating Russians or the invading Germans.

Although the Kaunas Museum is disappointing, it is only fair to the young Republic to remember that Lithuania's treasures rest at Vilna, and so long as Lithuanian aspirations are centred in the recovery of the ancient capital, the Kaunas Museum is not likely to be much improved.

In Kaunas the Lithuanians seem to have devoted their attention to the War Museum, which is entirely looked after by disabled soldiers. Each regiment has a section of its own, and there are some interesting portraits of the old Grand Dukes, together with a few examples of modern Lithuanian art.

In front of the rather unlovely modern building, whose stone tower does not blend with the roof of corrugated iron, is a public garden, charmingly laid out, with a glory of standard roses that were blooming as I have seldom seen roses bloom before. It is the strangest contrast to the Town Park which, inadequate as the Town Museum, lies just off Liberty Avenue and can hardly be more than two acres in extent; its grass, it is true, is shaded by trees, but it looks as unkempt as a tramp's beard and there is a litter of paper on its paths.

But the garden of the War Museum is different. Here the

Lithuanian seems to be on his good behaviour. He scatters no refuse to defile those trim pathways—he drops it into the wooden boxes that are placed beside the seats. In the Town Park he might belong to the great British Public which leaves behind its paper bags as a snail leaves behind its trail, indifferently disfiguring the face of park or common. But in the War Museum garden the Lithuanian is as tidy as the German in the Tiergarten at Berlin, where an expostulating policeman will come rushing up if you drop so much as a cherry stone, let alone throw away a paper bag.

Perhaps this is because the Lithuanians regard the garden as their own property (the foreign element in Kaunas is not seen there), for even in England a man does not fling his empty Goldflake packet on his own lawn. And the little garden, tended and weeded and watered by that band of disabled soldiers, is something, indeed the only thing, the Lithuanians have made for themselves in this Russian town. It is Lithuanian. It is their very own. And not only does it hold the bust of the most revered man in Lithuania, Dr. Jonas Basanavicius,* who for years has worked unceasingly in the cause of his country's liberty, but it holds as well the war memorial of the Lithuanian nation.

After the war the young Republic had no money to build an elaborate memorial to its dead and so, in the Museum garden, a cairn of stones was raised and consecrated in 1921. The cairn is surmounted by a cross of Lithuanian design, and on the cairn itself is another cross with a buckler and shield beneath it. The cairn bears the inscription :—

"ZUVUSIEMS
UZ
LIETUVOS LAISVE
1921"

("TO THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO DIED
FOR LITHUANIAN LIBERTY.")

* The Lithuanian c is pronounced like our ch in chapter, the z like z in azure.

Under the inscription is a pair of crossed rifles, with gleaming bayonets, and a bronze relief of a Lithuanian maiden, her head bowed in grief, holding a wreath of laurels ; while round the base, in boxes, flower geranium and convolvulus. Before the cairn is a plain granite altar with the Latin inscription :—

"REDDE QUOD DEBES"

On either side of the memorial are examples of old Lithuanian wooden crosses, exquisitely and elaborately carved. On the right is a flag-staff and a sentry-box, striped with the colours of the Republic—green, red and yellow. Here a sentry,—a disabled soldier—in service dress with steel helmet, is on duty from dawn to dusk.

The body of disabled soldiers to whom the care of the Museum and garden is entrusted are men of meritorious service, selected and maintained by the Republic. In the name of the whole nation they devote their lives to keeping immortal the memory of their fallen comrades, and at sunrise and sunset they perform beside the cairn the most touching and at the same time the most inspiring little ceremony it has ever been my privilege to see.

Each evening towards sundown the garden fills with people—peasant women, bare-footed children, officers and soldiers in uniform, civilians poor and well-to-do. Here and there you will see a grizzled warrior. One I noticed whose sleeve hung limply at his side. Each soldier salutes as he passes by the cairn, each civilian removes his hat.

On the first evening that I found my way to the garden the clock on the tower was striking eight as I entered, and at once the murmur of conversation was hushed. The bells rang out a chime. Then, on the battlements of the tower, appeared a trumpeter in a steel helmet. His figure stood black against the evening sky while he sounded a call.

As he brought his trumpet down there came, in answer to his summons, the sound of distant music. It came nearer, and into the garden marched a band of disabled soldiers. At the same moment I saw fire blaze up upon the pagan altar before the cairn.

THE LITHUANIAN WAR MEMORIAL

A few moments later the doors of the Museum opened and, led by the band playing the March for the Dead, came the warriors. The double cross of the Republic shone upon their helmets and each carried a lance with a pennant of black and red, the emblem of the knights of old. Before them were borne the colours of the State, while in the rear marched one, in a grey semi-uniform, limping but as tall as a British Guardsman, representing the unofficial army which came to the country's defence against the Bolshevik invasion.

They formed up beside the cairn. The band was silent. The officer gave a low word of command. Lances were thrust out and as the flag upon the tower was hauled down the band played the Hymn to the Virgin. At a second word of command, steel helmets were removed and the cross upon the cairn blazed with electric light as the Hymn of the Republic was played.

As I stood to attention amongst women with heads bent, and bare-headed men, I was not ashamed of the lump that came to my throat. None of the friends I had made in Kaunas, though they had shown me many things, had told me of that nightly honouring of their fallen soldiers. Perhaps they were afraid that I might be just politely interested, when it meant so much to them. Anyhow, I was glad they had let me find my way alone. Standing in that silent crowd, the cairn and its lighted cross rising grimly against a dark background of trees, the fire blazing upon the pagan altar, I seemed to see the Lithuanian more truly than before. Lithuania, it seemed, did not forget—she did not forget even the memory of her pagan gods—and it is well that at dawn and dusk she should honour her fallen so, for those sons of hers indeed won for her the liberty she had suffered so much to gain. It is well, too, that she should have chosen their wounded comrades to devote their lives to a memorial that must ever be a tribute to a glorious past and an inspiration to youth. Those tenders of the cairn and of the pagan altar form a noble brotherhood.

## CHAPTER II

## PER ASPERA AD ASTRA

The origin of the Lithuanians—Their centuries of isolation—The preservation of their ancient language—The coming of the Swordbearers—Lithuania becomes a nation of warriors—The Grand Dukes extend their conquests from the Baltic to the Black Sea—Lithuania becomes chained to Poland—Falls with her—Under the Russian yoke—Lithuanian mothers foster the national spirit—The war shatters hopes of liberty—The dawn breaks—Independence proclaimed—The Vilna question—Problems of the New Republic—Lithuania's future dependent on the prosperity of her farmers.

### § 1

THE fire burning on the pagan altar before the lighted cross of the Lithuanian War Memorial seemed to me symbolical of the nation's soul. Lithuania was one of the last strongholds of paganism in Europe and, although its inhabitants were officially converted to Christianity in the fourteenth century, even now, if you scratch a Lithuanian deep enough, you will find the pagan beneath the Catholic.

It seems almost as if this isolated people, who worshipped fire, personified in Perkunas, the god of thunder, were impelled to resist conversion by some presage of impending doom, for the victory of Christianity, when it came at last, brought them nothing but defeat, and the surrender not only of territorial conquests but, far worse, the enslavement of the national soul.

For more than a thousand years, however, the Lithuanians remained undisturbed, a peace-loving people, content to work out their destiny in the lands they had reached after centuries of wanderings from the shores of the Caspian Sea, the first home of the great Aryan family to which they belong. It may be that they came from an even more distant land, but their origin was in the East, and the old legends tell how by the decrees of their gods they were led

to journey on from a distant ocean until they reached another sea. Some think that they travelled eastward with the Greeks and then branched off to the north, forming with the Letts and the old Prussians, or Borussians, a separate branch of the Indo-European family with a distinct language of their own, until they reached the great plain that spreads from the Dvina to the Vistula and is bounded by the Baltic Sea.

Here, until the eleventh century, they remained isolated and at peace, their great forests like ramparts around them. It was during these centuries that the national spirit was developed, and it was because Lithuania had so little intercourse with the outside world that the character of her people took that grain of conservatism which was to preserve the national aspirations through the dark days that lay ahead.

This isolation, too, preserved the virginity of the Lithuanian tongue, so that it has been called "the most antique in its forms of all living languages of the world and most akin in its substance and spirit to the primeval Sanscrit."* Age Meyer Benedictsen relates that when the eminent Danish philologist Rasmus Rask, who lived in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, heard Lithuanian for the first time, he thought it must be some dialect of Sanscrit which in some wonderful way had been stranded in this corner of Europe.† It has many similarities, too, between Latin and ancient Greek. It would be difficult to prove, however, that such words were not borrowings of an early day, just as the number of Slav and German words indicate borrowings, possibly later, for the Lithuanian language is unquestionably an entirely distinct etymological unit. As Mr. E. J. Harrison has well said: "Slav and German borrowings no more make it German or Slav than

* Benjamin D. Dwight, *Modern Philology*. This is, however, a very sweeping statement and could hardly be justified until we possess a complete knowledge of all living languages of every family in the world. It would be more correct, as my friend Professor C. Otto Blagden, Dean of the School of Oriental Studies, observes, to call it the most archaic, or best-preserved, living language of the Indo-European family.

† *The Awakening of a Nation*, p. 40.

our own Greek and Latin borrowings would make English Greek or Latin."*

The purity of the Lithuanian tongue is as eloquent as history, proving, beyond doubt, that the Lithuanians themselves remained undisturbed for centuries, save perhaps for periodical raids made by the Vikings upon their coasts. But it was not possible that they should be left in peace for ever. Their first enemies were the Russian tribes on the east, whom, however, they kept at bay. Then came a new danger from the west.

§ 2

It is said that about the beginning of the thirteenth century some German merchants from Lübeck were driven by a storm to take shelter in the mouth of the Dvina river. That storm blew ill for Lithuania, since the news of a rich country inhabited by pagan tribes stirred the Teutonic knights, who were resting after the Crusades, to fresh activity. For those days, their excuse for their invasion of the Baltic lands was valid enough. Here was a race of heathen dwelling almost at their doors. They must be Christianized. That sounded well. But the missionaries of those days went to a pagan country with the cross in one hand and the sword in the other. The process of conversion could not begin until the land had been conquered and the inhabitants reduced to a state of serfdom. The German Order of the Swordbearers was but the forerunner of the Spanish *conquistadores*. Nor was the order wholly confined to Germans, for when the English knights wanted a little adventure overseas they were in the habit of serving in Prussia. Hence Chaucer's allusion to the knight in the *Canterbury Tales* :—†

"In Lettowe hadde he reysed‡ and in Ruce."

For nearly two centuries the Lithuanians defended their country against the monk-knights. Led by their pagan

* *Lithuania : Past and Present*, p. 37. It may be noted that Mr. Benedictsen holds the opposite view and maintains that Slavs and Lithuanians were originally one race. *Op. cit.*, p. 40.

† The Prologue, line 54. It may be noted that Lietuva is the Lithuanian form of the country's name. ‡ Campaigned.

priests, they changed from a peace-loving people to a race of warriors. The scattered tribes became united against the common foe, and leaders sprang up to defend their country, in its danger, just as they did seven centuries later. One of these leaders, Mindaugas, to save his country from the depredations of the knights, accepted Christianity and was baptized with all the nobles of his realm, trusting to the promise of the Pope that the crusade should cease. But the lust of conquest was too strong for the Swordbearers. They disregarded the Pope's order and continued their unholy war, until Mindaugas renounced his baptism and had the knights who were taken prisoner dressed in their armour, tied to their horses and burnt alive as sacrifices to the forsaken gods.

It may have been the toughness of the Lithuanian warriors, accustomed to the rigours of bison-hunting and forest life ; it may have been the leadership of those grand old princes the war days bred, or it may have been the faith of the defenders in the righteousness of their cause : anyhow, after years of bitter struggle, they triumphed and the invaders were thrown back.

By this time the metamorphosis of the Lithuanian race was complete. Years of unceasing warfare had animated it with the desire for conquest, and under the Grand Duke Gediminas not only did it regain its complete liberty, but its realm extended from the Baltic almost to the Black Sea.

This period was the summit of Lithuanian glory. Gediminas was one of those few men in history who may be called truly great : in him was that rare combination of military and administrative capacity and, though he had not the fame of an Alexander, he had something of his genius. He founded Vilna, having been led to the site, it is said, by a dream, and the town became the capital of the country in 1323.

Gediminas was a wise and tolerant ruler, and was the first of the Lithuanian sovereigns to throw open the doors of his country to Western civilization. Until his day Lithuania had been almost as untouched by Western influences as Japan was fifty years ago. Like the rulers of Japan,

he realized that a people could not remain isolated for ever and that if they were to compete with the West they must learn from the West. So the friar became as welcome at his court as the artist and, although he remained true to his pagan gods and had a sacred fire ever burning on the altar at the foot of Mount Gediminas, he countenanced the conversion of his people both to the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches.

Gediminas was killed in 1341 fighting against the Teutonic knights, and on his death one strand of the rope with which he had bound Lithuania to unity began to fray, for his realm was divided between his two sons, Keistutis ruling over the western territory and Algirdas over the eastern.

Yet under the rule of the two brothers the power of Lithuania did not wane. Algirdas, consolidating his father's conquests, three times entered Moscow as conqueror, but to some extent himself came under Russian influence. Keistutis, the founder of Kaunas, on the other hand, was a passionate nationalist, and it is he, and not his elder brother, who lives in the hearts of the Lithuanian people to-day. He seems to have been wholly a figure of romance and, like a true hero of the people, he made a romantic marriage, for his wife Biruté was a priestess who tended the sacred fire on the hill near Palanga which now bears her name, until Keistutis, coming upon her while he was out hunting, fell in love with her and carried her away.

Algirdas met the same fate as his father and fell in battle. His son Jagello inherited from his forbears that impelling force which bade him extend his country's realm, and this eagerness led him to gain by treachery and diplomacy what he could not gain by conquest. His first aim was to secure personal dominion over the whole of Lithuania, and, to accomplish his purpose, he captured his uncle Keistutis and his cousin Vytautas. Keistutis he caused to be strangled, but Vytautas was saved, as the story goes, by one of his mother's maids-of-honour, to whom he was betrothed, visiting him in prison and changing clothes with him in order that he might escape.

Having failed in his design for obtaining the supreme

power of all Lithuania, Jagello turned his attention to Poland, and, having embraced the Christian faith, married the young queen, promising to incorporate Lithuania with his consort's kingdom. The pagan temple built by Gediminas at Vilna was pulled down and a church erected on its site, a sign that the last stronghold of heathenism in Europe had fallen. The power of Vytautas, who had the Lithuanian nobles behind him, was, however, unassailable, and eventually Jagello was forced to restore to him the realms of Keistutis, though Lithuania and Poland remained nominally allied, Jagello being recognized as the sovereign of both countries, while his cousin held the title of Grand Duke of Lithuania.

In 1410 Vytautas finally broke the power of the Teutonic knights on the field of Tannenberg, which was to become the scene of another historic battle five centuries later. He extended the territory of Lithuania to the north and east, and it was thanks to Vytautas, and to Vytautas alone, that the whole of Europe was not overrun by the Tartar hordes of Tamerlane.

By this time Vytautas was become the most powerful prince in Europe. His possessions extended from Palanga on the Baltic to Odessa on the Black Sea. Like his grandfather Gediminas, he was a wise and enlightened sovereign ; by building roads he opened up the country to peaceful trade ; he had travelled much, he spoke German and Latin, he was ever approachable by his subjects and as ready to redress wrongs as he was ruthless to stamp out disaffection in his realm. Towards the end of his life he had dreams of proclaiming himself King of Lithuania, but although he received the support of Sigismund, the Emperor of Germany, and of the Holy Roman Empire, the opposition of the Poles proved too strong and in 1430 he died uncrowned.

Gediminas, Keistutis, Vytautas—these are the glorious names of Lithuanian history. Their memory is enshrined in a thousand songs and will never die. Seldom has history known three successive generations in which the high attributes of rulership and generalship were so consistently reproduced : for great men rarely beget great men.

With Vytautas this noble breed passed away and did not rise again, much as Lithuania had need of it. As the years went by, the Polish influence against which Vytautas had fought for thirty years penetrated Lithuania as inevitably as jungle will penetrate an abandoned clearing. Lithuania had been a sun ; she became a satellite. Polish officials filled the highest offices, Polish became the language of the Court. The nobles, forgetting their own high traditions, became Polonized and, in the process, lost more than they ever gained. The peasantry became oppressed and sank into the condition of serfs, and, finding little solace from the priests, who were Polish and did not speak Lithuanian, they remained pagan at heart. Knowledge and education, that monopoly of the Church in mediæval times, were denied them, and it was perhaps for this very reason that in their sorry condition they clung, as unhappy people will, to the traditions of an older day. The sacred fire of Lithuania became a symbol, for not only on the pagan altars but in the hearts of the common people it was kept alive.

For three and a half centuries this process did not cease. Lithuania became chained to Poland like a captive to a tree : and was crushed in Poland's downfall. By the end of the eighteenth century Poland as an independent kingdom had ceased to exist and Lithuania was divided between Prussia and Russia. As Mr. E. J. Harrison puts it, " This ancient land, which in the past had subdued the power of the Teutonic knights and repulsed the Tartar invasion, was sold into bondage like so much vile merchandise. At the debut of her history Lithuania had produced a Gediminas, a Keistutis and a Vytautas ; at the time of the partitions nought remained save an enfeebled and a depraved nobility and a people who vegetated in misery and ignorance. The " Lietuvos Vytis " (Lithuanian Knight), symbol of a glorious past, was relegated with the Polish Eagle to the dust heap. From that moment the Black Eagle of Russia spread its sombre wings over Lithuania, who was destined to retrieve her national dignity under the Muscovite claws."*

* *Lithuania : Past and Present*, p. 53.

§ 3

Under the Russian yoke Lithuania's lot became even harder than before. Her last remnants of independence were torn from her. Her people became like a family who are forced to become servants in their own house. Instead of Polish officials there were Russians; those who had tried to withstand being Polonized now found themselves faced with the menace of Russification.

Moreover, the Russians were no less thorough in their methods than the Poles had been. The Poles indeed suffered even more than the Lithuanians, for the energies of Russia were directed particularly against Polish culture, Lithuanian culture at this period being for all intents and purposes non-existent. The Lithuanians, however, were not spared. Even the name of Lithuania was wiped off the map and the country became officially part of the North-West Provinces of Russia.

By this time the Lithuanian people had become Roman Catholics, but now the State religion was that of the Orthodox Church, and many of the old wooden churches were closed, and others were taken over by the Russians. A typical example was the Pazaisliai Church a few miles outside Kaunas, which had been built by the Lithuanian Grand Duke Pocius in the seventeenth century, and decorated by two Italian painters, Ludvico Fredo and Pietro Puttini. With the Pope's permission, Pocius brought from Italy twelve monks of the Camadule Brotherhood, a silent Order whose members meet together once a day to utter the words "*memento mori*." The brotherhood, skilled craftsmen whose carved panelling may still be seen in the church, was left in peace till 1832 when the Russians drove out and tortured its members, and handed the church over to the Orthodox authorities, but not before they had looted some of its pictures and marble, even rifling the mausoleum in the crypt where the founder and his family lay buried.*

* The Germans looted this church of anything that remained; in their quest of the treasure which was supposed to be still hidden in the vicinity of the church, they even disturbed the catacombs in which the dead monks were deposited on planks—their bones may be seen to-day scattered in

The University which had been founded at Vilna by the Poles was closed too, the higher schools were suppressed, private schools were prohibited, and Russian teachers were sent to replace the Catholic priests. After an insurrection in 1863, which was put down with the utmost barbarity, the Lithuanian language was banished altogether from the schools, so that not even the Bible might be taught in the mother tongue, and by 1894 no Government post, not even that of a roadmender, might be held by a Lithuanian. The professions of medicine and the law were closed to the inhabitants of the country and it was only natural that large numbers should emigrate to the United States.

Yet in spite of all these bitter years of persecution the national spirit of Lithuania did not die. It was the mothers of Lithuania who kept it alive. The country homesteads became schools where the children learnt to speak and write their native tongue and to read it in books smuggled across the frontier, although even the teaching of the Lithuanian language in the home was punishable by a fine of three hundred roubles. The mothers of Lithuania were like the priestesses of the ancient days, and in time the fire they had tended so carefully burst into the flame of a national revival, led and fostered by Dr. Basanavicius and a little band of patriots who braved punishment and even death to awaken the national consciousness once again as the best means of bettering the condition of the helpless peasants.

They did not work in vain. The awakening of Lithuania began. Every year more papers were published, more books were printed, in spite of the opposition of the Russian Government, until at last the new movement triumphed and the embargo against Lithuanian printing was removed.

Shortly afterwards, in 1905, came the Revolution following the defeat of Russia by Japan : it seemed that at last the hour of independence was come. Under the leadership of Dr. Basanavicius an All-Lithuanian Congress was held

confusion ; one or two soldiers who tried to explore the underground passage which is said to lead to the Carmelite Church at Kaunas, three miles away, did not return. The monks' place is now taken by sisters from the American Convent of St. Charold.

at Vilna and attended by some two thousand delegates representing all classes, callings and parties, and it was resolved that the Lithuanian people should be satisfied only with self-government: Lithuania must be resuscitated within her ethnographical boundaries as an autonomous State in the Russian Empire, with Vilna as her capital, and with Lithuanian as the official language.

These demands were never granted and, the danger of the Revolution once passed, the authorities became no less uncompromising than before; the freedom of Press and of assembly proclaimed by the Tsar became a sham. But by this time the national movement, greatly assisted by the women, was a reality and as the years went on it grew stronger like a rising wind. National schools were established and a flood of educational and religious literature issued from the Lithuanian Press: during the decade preceding the European War 2550 books were published in the native language—nearly three and a half times the number published during the previous three and a half centuries. Schools sprang up. The arts were encouraged. The primitive system of three crop tillage began to give place to more scientific methods of agriculture. The Lithuanians, always hungry for land, began once more to attach themselves to their little farms and, in spite of the Russian colonists planted and subsidized by the Government, they began to get possession of the land through private enterprise and through societies that were founded for the purpose of acquiring farm land and re-selling it.

Most significant of all, many of those who, despairing of making a living at home, had emigrated to the United States began to return to their native country. It was indeed in no small degree thanks to this Lithuanian colony in America, which numbered over three-quarters of a million, that the new movement received strength, and those who had made a home overseas continued to support their less fortunate fellow-countrymen in Lithuania with funds and active co-operation.

A few more years and it seemed that Lithuania would gain the liberty and independence she had so long desired

and for which she had striven so ardently. But it was not to be. Just as the prize seemed within her grasp the war came, and with the war the shattering of all her hopes.

§ 4

Lithuania was the first of the Baltic States to feel the fury of the war. It would be difficult to say whether she suffered more from her nominal protectors, the retreating Russians, or from her enemies, the advancing Germans.

After the failure of the Russian defensive in East Prussia in the autumn of 1914 there drove across Lithuania two devastating winds. First came the Russians, who lived on the country and, as the Germans advanced, burnt what they could not eat or carry away. Villages and towns that were not deliberately given to the flames were shattered by shell fire. Even the churches were not spared. In one district the wretched inhabitants, having not even a roof over their heads, were forced to sleep in the abandoned trenches.

The great fortress of Kaunas fell in August, 1918, and Vilna three weeks later. Some of the inhabitants who remained in the stricken towns and farmsteads—no men of military age had been left by the Russians—may have hoped that the occupation would bring relief. Such hopes were not realized. The German military authorities looked upon Lithuania as a sponge, to be squeezed dry. Under the occupation the country became like a gigantic store in which it was possible to obtain everything, from eggs to timber, without payment. Once more the Lithuanian Press was forbidden. German propaganda was spread assiduously and the unhappy country, having suffered in the past from the effects of Polonization and Russification, now suffered from the effects of Germanization administered in ruthless doses.

All this pointed to one end—the annexation of Lithuania by Germany. But that hardy spirit which had worked so devotedly for Lithuanian liberty was almost the only thing that neither Russian nor German could destroy. Moreover, Lithuanians in the United States, particularly the large colonies in Chicago, Pennsylvania and New

England, did not forget their countrymen in their hour of need. Not only did they contribute generously to relief funds but, together with Lithuanians in the neutral countries of Europe, they worked unceasingly for the protection of Lithuanian interests.

In 1917 a National Council was formed in Lithuania and on February 16, 1918, the country was proclaimed an Independent State. This independence was recognized by Germany in a document signed by the Kaiser himself, but the military party did not cease to make desperate efforts to bring about the annexation.

It seemed that the downfall of Germany would leave Lithuania free to work out her own salvation. But soon a fresh danger threatened the Provisional Government that had been set up, for the German collapse opened the way to the Bolsheviks, who began their advance early in 1919.

Vilna was evacuated and the Government moved to Kaunas. For a while it seemed that the liberty gained after such bitter struggles was to be lost. But once more the dogged courage that had animated the followers of Gediminas awoke in Lithuanian breasts. Old and young flocked to the colours ; an army was hurriedly organized and, fired with the justice of its cause, as the soldiers of Gediminas had been seven centuries before, flung the Red Army back. There were wild rejoicings when it became known that Vilna would soon be in Lithuanian hands once more. Then came the bitterest disappointment of the war, for a Polish army, marching from the south, entered Vilna on April 20, 1919.

Nothing could then have prevented Lithuania from springing at Poland's throat had not the Supreme Council of the Allies laid down a line of demarcation between the two countries. Although this line, and others which followed it, were violated by the Poles, the Lithuanians stayed their hands and contented themselves with freeing their country from Bermondt and his army of adventurers who, having been driven out of Latvia,* had occupied the central portion of Lithuania and prepared for a march on

* See page 127.

Kaunas. With the assistance of the Letts, Bermondt was completely defeated at Siauliai in November, 1919, leaving thirty aeroplanes, three armoured trains, four million shells and vast stores in the victors' hands. Only the intervention of the French Government saved Bermondt's army from annihilation, and, hoping for assistance in the Polish dispute, the Lithuanians acquiesced in allowing France to take control of the captured war material.

It was a vain hope.

§ 5

After their coup in 1919, the Poles held Vilna for just over a year. They remained at war with the Soviet Government, whose armies eventually swept forward in a victorious advance on Warsaw, occupying Vilna as they went. The Lithuanians, who had made a favourable peace treaty with the Bolsheviks, remained neutral, on the understanding that Vilna should be handed over to them. The promise was kept and once more the Lithuanian Government found itself in the ancient capital.

But not for long. Once more the tide of battle turned, and the Poles drove back the Red Army from Warsaw. Hostilities broke out between Lithuania and Poland, but an agreement was drawn up with the object of settling their differences and was signed by representatives of the two countries at Suvalkai on October 7, 1920.

Mr. E. J. Harrison puts forward the Lithuanian contention when he states that under the agreement " Poland formally recognized the validity of the Lithuanian occupation and provisional administration of the Vilna (Vilnius) region, including the city of that name."* The Poles, on the other hand, claim that the document was nothing more than an agreement for an armistice and it is only fair to them to state that in Chapter I (a) of the agreement it is expressly stipulated that the line of demarcation agreed upon " does not decide beforehand what are the territorial rights of the two contracting parties."

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that at the time the

* *Lithuania : Past and Present*, p. 100.

Lithuanians honestly believed that a settlement of their differences with Poland was at hand. Freed from their invaders, their liberty attained and their independence recognized, they believed that they were to achieve their last desire—the possession of the ancient capital. To them the promise of the future must have seemed bright indeed.

Then exactly two days after the signing of the agreement, Polish and White Russian troops, under the notorious General Zeligowski, attacked and occupied Vilna, just as though a state of war still existed between the two countries and no document for the cessation of hostilities had ever been signed.

It was one of the most barefaced acts of faithlessness in history. Nor can the Government of Poland be exonerated because Zeligowski's soldiers were composed mainly of inhabitants of Vilna and the surrounding districts who were exasperated at seeing the town in the possession of Lithuanian troops, or because it did not recognize Zeligowski's action officially. He was afterwards rewarded with high honours, and in spite of the protests of the Lithuanian Government, which had moved back to Kaunas in time, the Poles retained their hold on Vilna and retain it to this day.*

Since Poland had appealed to the League of Nations on the subject of her quarrel with Lithuania, and since the Suvalkai agreement had been signed in the presence of the Military Control Commission, the treacherous occupation of Vilna was a blow to the prestige of the League. Yet although the League censured Zeligowski's action it failed to exact respect for its authority or to obtain any redress for what Lord Robert Cecil called " an international scandal." Finally, on March 15, 1923, the Conference of Ambassadors, whose policy was governed largely by the French desire to support Poland at all costs as a barrier against Bolshevism, handed over to Poland not only Vilna, but also adjacent

* Mr. Harrison, as British Vice-Consul at Vilna, was one of the last to leave the city before the occupation and returned ten days later in the capacity of special correspondent to a London paper. Although his sympathies are frankly Lithuanian, the signed depositions of Polish officers he publishes in his book go to prove that the entire plot was engineered by Marshal Pilsudski himself in conjunction with other highly placed Polish officers.

districts occupied and cultivated by Lithuanians, though admittedly largely owned by Polish landlords.

Lithuania naturally protested vehemently to the League, declaring that she would never recognize the annexation of the Vilna district by Poland, but her protests have so far been of no avail. The *fait accompli* is allowed to remain so, as in international disputes it so often is.

There, for the time being, the matter stands. To the Poles there is no Vilna question. They have the city and undoubtedly they intend to hold it. But to the Lithuanians the Vilna question is paramount in their thoughts. While in the country I talked to scores of people, from peasants to Ministers, and seldom have I heard such unity of expression. "To Vilna": that is the nation's cry. Without Vilna Lithuania is like a statue without a head, a cathedral without a spire. There is no party in Lithuania that would consent to abandon Vilna to the Poles; no Minister who assented to the annexation would hold his office for five minutes.

The Lithuanians claim Vilna on every possible ground: historically, because Vilna was founded as the nation's capital and through all her years of persecution remained the home of national culture and was the centre of her political renaissance; juridically, because Soviet Russia recognized Lithuanian sovereignty over Vilna in the Treaty of Moscow, dated July 12, 1920; ethnographically, since Lithuanians are the autochthonous population, and although admittedly they are not now the strongest element in Vilna itself a large proportion of the peasants in the surrounding country are Lithuanians,* even though many have been driven out by the Poles; finally geographically, because Vilna is the principal city of the Nemunas basin, which (it is maintained) consolidates Lithuania into an indivisible whole, both territorially and economically; the Lithuanians claim that the control of the upper waters of the Nemunas and Vilna belong to this region, and that Vilna is the natural

* For details see the Lithuanian Government publication, *The Vilna Problem*, p. 7 *et seq.* According to the Russian Empire Census of 1897, Lithuanians formed 23 per cent of the population of the territory now claimed by Lithuania, Poles 10 per cent, and White Russians 46 per cent.

junction of Lithuanian railways. And perhaps sentimental grounds are stronger than all of these.

Briefly, those are the Lithuanian contentions. It is now necessary to examine the Polish point of view. The Poles claim that there is a great difference between historic and ethnographical Lithuania. Historically, Lithuania extended at one period, as I have shown, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, subsequently becoming united to Poland by ties which, for better or worse, became closer as time went on. Ethnographical Lithuania, however, that is, territory inhabited by pure-bred Lithuanians, did not exceed one-eighth of the whole State, in which the White Russian and Ruthenian element predominated. If Lithuania were to pursue the historical claim to its logical conclusion, say the Poles, she would be justified in demanding all her former territory, just as they, the Poles, might claim the whole of Lithuania on the same grounds, it having once been under Polish sovereignty. Ethnographically the Poles maintain that the Lithuanians are not the aboriginal (or autochthonous) population of this area, since they drove out an older race and that at present it is the Polish and not the Lithuanian element which predominates in the Vilna area. Published figures (which, it must be stated, the Lithuanians do not accept) show that in 1919 the population of the Vilna district was composed of 62 per cent Poles and 12 per cent Lithuanians; in the town itself, out of a total of some 130,000 56 per cent were Poles and only 2 per cent Lithuanians—36 per cent being Jews. An inspection of the figures given for each subdivision of the occupied territory shows that in no instance does the Lithuanian population equal or even approach the Polish population in numbers.*

Historically, ethnographically and philogically (since the Polish language predominates in Vilna) the Poles claim that the city is more Polish than Lithuanian.† Then as to

* *Annuaire de la Pologne*, 1922. Post-war propaganda statistics must naturally be treated with reserve, and the Vilna nationality question may be fairly summarized as containing three roughly equal minorities—Polish, Lithuanian and White Russian, while the city itself is Jewish.

† Here again it must be remembered that the Jews speak Polish.

juridical claim under the Treaty of Moscow they point out that by the later Treaty of Riga Soviet Russia expressly dissociated herself with the future of Vilna, leaving it as a matter for settlement between the two States themselves; while (say the Poles) if the territorial contention and Lithuania's claim to the basin of the Nemunas were admitted there would be nothing to prevent her demanding large tracts of Polish territory beyond the Vilna area and a slice of Soviet Russia into the bargain. In fairness to Lithuania, it must be said that she shows no sign of making such a claim. There is nothing to prevent England claiming Calais back—but she does not.

The Poles assert that far from Vilna being the natural junction of the Lithuanian railways, it is of greater importance to them, being on the main lines between Warsaw, Petrograd and Moscow. The Poles admit that Zeligowski's coup was a technical breach of the Suvalkai Armistice, as indeed all coups (including, as they point out, the Lithuanian coup at Klaipeda) are a breach of some agreement, but deny that it received the support of the Polish Government. They also deny that from the day on which they described Zeligowski as a rebel they began to send him daily supply trains of food, clothing and military stores, and despatched numbers of Polish soldiers in plain clothes to recruit his forces and to constitute the large Polish population for the plebiscite which decided Vilna's incorporation in the Polish State. Yet there is good reason to believe that these things happened.

That, briefly, is the Lithuanian case and the Polish answer to it. I have tried to state it as fairly as possible, so that the reader may form a judgment. It seems impossible to acquit Poland of bad faith in the matter of the Zeligowski coup, for not even a formal expression of regret was ever made, but perhaps the most sensible way to look at the matter is that after the war neither Lithuania nor Poland had any rights except those the Allies chose to recognize. The Allies set them up as Independent Republics but, most unfortunately as it turned out, without definitely fixing their boundaries then and there. And although even

M. Léon Bourgeois expressed to M. Paderewski the League's disapproval of Poland's action in occupying Vilna and requested him to communicate to his Government the desire of the League for the evacuation of Vilna without delay, nothing was done, and finally the Council of Ambassadors legalized Poland's flagrant violation of her solemn undertakings.

Recriminations, however, will not now solve the impasse that has been reached, for Lithuania herself, anyhow in her present frame of mind, is not likely to accept Poland's point of view.

I asked many Lithuanians for a solution of the problem. For them there is but one solution—the Polish evacuation of Vilna. That, they realize, is not likely to take place voluntarily. In fact, if Poland could have her way Lithuania would become an autonomous State under Polish sovereignty, nor does it seem likely that any help is to be expected from the League. What then ?

The moderates realize that at present a war with Poland would be national suicide. They are content for the time being to continue the work of Lithuanian culture in the Vilna region and to support the Lithuanian element against Polish oppression. " We shall bide our time," as one said to me. " The day may come when the Bolsheviks will attack Poland once more. Then, perhaps, we shall enter Vilna again."

It is extremely probable that if Lithuania ever did take advantage of Poland's difficulties, she would find herself in a worse plight than before, since once the Bolsheviks had disposed of Poland, the turn of Lithuania would assuredly come next. Moreover, it is even doubtful whether the occupation of Vilna would eventually prove to Lithuania's advantage : she, already a nation of minorities, would but add to their numbers, which are already large, and she would have her capital on the borders of the country and exposed to a Bolshevik attack. The Lithuanian occupation of the Vilna area would leave Poland with an even narrower corridor than she has already, and a break through on the southern part might isolate the northern and so mean

disaster. The present policy of Western European Governments is to look to Poland, not to Lithuania, as the buffer between them and Bolshevism, and so on international grounds Lithuania is unlikely to find support.

There are, however, firebrands both in military and political circles who would like to see a systematic organization for an advance on Vilna, with the support of the Germans and Bolsheviks. There seemed to me no doubt that if a war for the liberation of the Vilna area were proclaimed to-morrow the whole country-side would come flocking to the flag. The Lithuanians, being a race of farmers, would have little sympathy in normal times with the Bolsheviks, and they hate the Germans as heartily as the Russians. But so great is their desire for the possession of Vilna that their aid would not be difficult to win if the city was dangled before them as a prize.

That is the danger. The Vilna question is the great menace to peace in the Baltic States, for it has made Lithuania the bitter enemy of Poland, whereas it is in the interests of both States to dwell in friendship together—and Poland, with large armies to maintain against the forces that threaten her, has need of friends. In the past Lithuania and Poland were like two swimmers whose heads were held under by bullying Russia : it is deplorable that they should come to the surface at last only to quarrel. The feeling for the possession of Vilna is undoubtedly intense in Lithuania, but it is a matter for conjecture whether the patriotism and sentimentalism of the Lithuanians is not being cunningly played upon by agents of Bolshevism, for whose benefit it is that the wound should be kept open. These States of Eastern Europe are faced with a great and very real danger. In unity alone will safety be found ; disunity may mean disaster not only for themselves but for the States whose outposts they are. And so long as the Lithuanian and Polish outposts face each other on the frontier as they do to-day, neither country can take full advantage of the liberty and independence won for them by the Allied victory.

§ 6

Nevertheless, in spite of the obsession of the Vilna question, Lithuania has done much since she gained her liberty. Peace found the head of the Lithuanian knight bloody but unbowed and, inspired by him, the country rose like a phœnix from the ashes of devastation. She had been deprived of much of the land she felt was her right, for, besides that occupied by the Poles, a quarter of a million Lithuanians remained in German Lithuania between Tilsit and Koenigsberg, while the control of the Klaipeda Territory (or Lithuania Minor) was withheld from her in spite of her claims at the Peace Conference.

But within the territory left her, she set herself to consolidate. Assistance was showered on the new Republics. Those who had money—and there was little enough left—gave it gladly; loans were raised both internally and amongst Lithuanian Americans; men joined the army, bringing their own rifles and equipment with them; railway material was obtained from Germany, who was glad enough to help Lithuania for the same reasons that the French were helping the Poles.

Meanwhile Lithuania had been recognized by the Powers as an Independent State. She had evolved a Constitution under which freedom of religion, Press and assembly were guaranteed, the rights of local government were recognized, and national minorities—such as Russians, Germans, Poles and Jews—were allowed to administer their own cultural affairs—a right that had been denied the Lithuanians themselves for centuries.* All citizens were called upon for military service; primary education was made compulsory; womanhood being the foundation of family life, the equality of the sexes was recognized and the Parliament or Seimas, which consists of a Single Chamber of seventy-eight repre-

* At the same time it must be mentioned that the Polish minority in Lithuania has many grievances, and early in 1924 complained to the Council of the League of Nations that the Polish language was being forbidden in the churches, that Polish schools were being closed, Polish citizens expelled and unjustifiably deported, and Polish newspapers either suppressed or ruthlessly censored.

sentatives, is elected by universal adult suffrage, the executive being controlled by a Council of Ministers. The strongest party in the State is that of the Christian Democrats, whose tendencies are moderate; they are drawn largely from the country districts, where religious influence is strong, though the party also has adherents among the industrial workers of the towns. The Seimas is housed at present in a former Russian college in Kaunas, and the sessions are open to the general public. When I paid a visit I noticed several women delegates, but was told that, although there were Jews, Poles, Russians and Germans, Lithuanians predominated by an absolute majority and that there were no Communists.

Finance was one of the most pressing of the many problems which confronted the new Government. After the collapse of the Russian rouble the German authorities introduced the Ost-mark, placing it on a par with the Reichmark. This currency continued to circulate until 1922, and the mark had fallen before the new Government introduced a currency of its own, so that not only did the unhappy people twice lose their all but the State Treasury was depleted and had nothing to cover the cost of the most necessary expenditure. At the end of 1922, however, a new currency was established, guaranteed by gold; owing to the extensive dealings of Lithuania with the United States it was created on the dollar basis, one lita being equal to a tenth of an American gold dollar, and this currency has remained stable.

In the early years the Government was naturally faced with a deficit, but by the end of 1924 the surplus of revenue over expenditure amounted to £310,000; imports and exports had risen from £1,400,000 and £1,900,000 in 1920 to £5,925,000 and £4,590,000 respectively. The chief imports are textiles, coal, kerosene, foodstuffs, metal wares and machinery, while the chief exports are linseed, flax, corn and flour, eggs, butter and timber.

Germany is by far the largest buyer and seller, in 1923 taking nearly half her exports and selling her 80 per cent of her needs, while although Great Britain took nearly

30 per cent of Lithuanian exports (chiefly eggs) she supplied only 5 per cent of her needs, though textiles, haberdashery and fancy goods, iron and metal products are the chief of these. The United States were responsible for barely 2 per cent of Lithuania's exports and only 3 per cent of her imports.

Lithuania possesses no mineral wealth. Her industries, such as they are—breweries, tanneries, iron foundries and flax mills—were wrecked by the war. The factories, most of which were destroyed or dismantled by the Russians, are slowly being re-established, but it will be long before they reach their pre-war output, since capital, Lithuania's most pressing need, is scarce.

But the country's true wealth lies in her forests and in her flat agricultural lands where the Lithuanian farmer cultivates his corn, his potatoes and his flax, and raises his pigs and cattle. The forests—mainly pine, fir, birch and alder—even now cover nearly a fifth of the territory and are the property of the State, while nearly half the territory consists of arable land. Thanks to the Agrarian Reform initiated by the new State the peasant, so long a serf, now owns his land, and Lithuania herself is a country of little farms and timber homesteads. On the prosperity of her farmers depends her future: by the success or failure of the once landless men who have at last come into their own will she make her way.

## CHAPTER III

## THE HAPPY PEOPLE

The road to Mariampolé—A prosperous countryside—The festival of St. Anne—A visit to a Lithuanian farm—The outraged priest—Lithuanian hospitality—Agrarian reform—Land for the landless—The remedy for Bolshevism—The farmer's daily round—Child workers—How a Lithuanian wooes—Status of women—Some riddles and superstitions.

### § 1

THE finest agricultural district in southern Lithuania is in the neighbourhood of Mariampolé, a country town about thirty-five miles from Kaunas. The road to Mariampolé is roughly metalled and, like most roads in the Baltic States, is extremely bad. As a matter of fact, considering that they have been fought over again and again and that most of them have not been repaired since 1914, the wonder is, not that the roads are bad, but that there are any roads at all.

I found myself jolting along the Mariampolé road one rainy morning in a car put at my disposal by the Lithuanian Foreign Office and driven by a chauffeur borrowed from the War Ministry, the green, red and yellow flag of the Republic fluttering above the bonnet. With me were Miss Jadvyga Gudovicaite and Mr. Bagdonas, of the Lithuanian Telegraphic Association, or "Elta"—a news agency which is attached to the Foreign Office, and not only disseminates news and general information but befriends passing travellers like myself.

Bagdonas had been up till the small hours playing poker, and, having overslept himself, had delayed our start half an hour. That was nothing, for, as I had already found, everyone keeps everyone else waiting in the Baltic States. Mercifully I had lived in the East and was used to it. The fresh morning air soon revived his wilted spirits (he had

had an unprofitable evening, I gathered) and soon we were a merry party, chattering in French, Miss Gudovicaite translating Bagdonas' Lithuanian when his French failed him.

The long straight road ran through fields of rye, wheat, barley, potatoes and blue-flowering flax, which is here grown mainly for local needs and not on a large scale as in northern Lithuania. Sometimes we would pass a great wooden windmill, its sails motionless, or dash through a village with timber houses stretching in two long lines on either side of the road, its single street, scaring the horses of the long Lithuanian carts. And everywhere, on the right hand and on the left hand and far into the distance, were the little timber farmsteads with roofs of thatch or wooden shingles, the old ones girt by groves of cherry trees or grey-green willows, the new ones, built since Lithuania gained her liberty, set in the open fields.

Many of these new farms were building as we passed by, often on the ashes of those cherished homes that had been burnt by the retreating Russians lest even so much as a shelter should fall into the invader's hands. All were built to one pattern, like houses in a suburban road—a square-fenced compound with dwelling-house, single-storied, at one end, stable and barn on either side, and in the centre a well whose bucket was worked up and down by means of a long pole which when at rest stood pointing starkly to the sky.

In the fields were grazing cattle and goats and sheep and pigs, in little flocks, a happy family, tended by a small boy or an old woman. It all seemed as peaceful, and as quietly prosperous, as an English countryside and it was hard to believe that, but a few years before, the whole land had been under the heel of the Germans, who lived on the country, paid for nothing, and would not even allow the peasants a draught of milk for their own children.

Nowhere is the hand of the invader more evident than in the little patches of fir and pine forests which break up the landscape and sometimes line the road : many of them have been eaten into and only the stumps remain. It is said

that the Germans removed from Lithuania timber enough to last them twenty years, and in one place a disused light railway line ran alongside the road, built for the purpose of transporting the logs that were then so precious.

Many stories of those war days Miss Gudavicaite told me as we passed those stricken forests, and it was easy to understand how deep was the feeling against the Germans even then. In Berlin I had been told that the Lithuanians were pro-German. In Lithuania I soon found that this was not so. More than that, the Germans left too bitter a memory behind, and the war is still too close to these simple country people for them to forgive the treatment they received during those weary years, so that their present attitude of triumph over their self-made enemies is not unnatural.

We found great activity in Mariampolé, for it was the festival of St. Anne. We made our way to the church, which is attached to a monastery of Mariam brothers, from whom the town takes its name. In all my life I have never seen a church so crammed. Even the aisles and vestries were thronged with men and women ; women were kneeling on the wet flagstones of the churchyard. Among them were many sick and cripples who had come to be cured, and we saw one aged dame walking on her knees three times round the church, in fulfilment of a vow she had made before health had been restored to her by the intervention of St. Anne. The Lithuanians may be pagans still, but they are certainly good Catholics too. For a while we listened to the service looking down from a high gallery on to a sea of white head-cloths below—I was disappointed not to find any gaily coloured Lithuanian dresses.

The town itself is not particularly interesting. Like Kaunas, it is typically Russian, and the inevitable cobbled streets, vilely muddy after the morning rain, were lined with a great gathering of beggars, who reap a rich harvest on such days without need of importunity. But the town has a pleasant shady park and here I came upon a newly planted oak tree. I asked Bagdonas why it was so meticulously fenced.

A LITHUANIAN CART

THE GOOSE-GIRL

"We Lithuanians call it the Vilna tree," he answered. "All over the country you will find such young trees growing. Like our aspirations, they will never be allowed to die."

Vilna again, Vilna everywhere! In modern Lithuania the old oak tree, before which was so often a pagan shrine, is a memorial of former greatness; but the young one is an exhortation. So long as the oak trees grow, Vilna will never be sundered from Lithuanian hearts.

§ 2

Mariampolé is the cradle of Lithuanian regeneration, for most of those who have striven so tirelessly for liberty were educated there. The kind monks showed us a Teachers' Seminary, half built, where both Greek and Latin will be taught. As we walked round the long garden of the monastery I fell into conversation with Father Peter Saurusaitis, a Lithuanian who had spent thirty-six years as a priest in the United States and was now visiting his mother-country for the second time. He had a parish of Lithuanians not far from New York, and since he was the only member of the party who spoke English, the Prefect of the district, who accompanied by the local Bank Manager had now taken command of our expedition, suggested that he should come with us on the tour he had arranged round the countryside.

We packed into the car, made for the open country again and soon reached our first port of call, the farm of Mr. Kriauciunas, who gave us a cordial welcome. The farm-house, which was occupied by a German artillery unit during the war, was built of pine logs; the outside walls were covered with planks, but in the hall one could see how moss took the place of mortar between each log, and it was easy to understand that these timber houses are warm in winter and cool in summer, and why they are not likely to be displaced by brick and stone for many years. Anyhow, one may be allowed to hope so. Beside the soft colour of those wooden walls and shingled roof our host's new cattle shelter, which he showed us with great pride—a long roofless building of red brick—seemed a blotch on the face of the country.

It was a warning of what Lithuania might become if bricks replaced logs. I prayed that it might not be a prophecy.

Having been welcomed by our host's sister, we were taken to a stiffly furnished drawing-room whose plastered walls were distempered blue. Soon dinner was announced. It was then three o'clock, and having had nothing since my roll and coffee at eight I was ravenous.

It was a wonderful meal. It began with several rounds of cognac in liqueur glasses. Then come a plate of small sausages, eaten with cheese and honey, and excellent farm-made bread. The second course was a vast dish of young chickens, split in twain; with it came preserved strawberries in syrup, served in what I took to be enormous champagne glasses. At first I imagined it to be a new kind of drink and only just saved myself from quaffing a beaker. As a matter of fact, it went with those chickens as delightfully as red-currant jelly goes with mutton.

Potato pancakes followed chicken; vodka followed cognac; krupnikas—a kind of mead—followed vodka. Krupnikas is a Lithuanian drink, made on the farms, of honey, sugar, alcohol, and a number of spices and herbs. It is thick and somewhat cloying, but nevertheless very good, though, like curaçoa, it would be improved by the addition of some very fine old brandy.

I noticed that Madame did not eat with us, being, like Martha, cumbered with much serving, for it was she who brought in the great dishes and changed the plates. Our host, however, administered the liquor, rising from his seat and coming round to my end of the table, bottle in hand, not to be denied. Protests were unavailing: there was nothing for it but to thank Providence that concourse with one's fellows in Eastern clubs had given one a strong head and to take each libation at a single gulp, as the others did. Soon everyone had become extraordinarily friendly, Bagdonas particularly: he insisted on drinking toasts to my daughter, to his son, to England, to Lithuania; at each toast the company clinked glasses before draining them with a quick throw-back of the head.

Meanwhile the reverend Father, who, it appeared, was

a staunch vegetarian and prohibitionist, had taken exception to the strawberry conserve which, after a mouthful, he declared in an outraged voice contained alcohol. Soon he became involved in a heated argument with the rest of the company on the Liquor Question, in which even Madame, who so far had been silent, spiritedly joined. It was an unequal contest ; so convivial a dinner-party was scarcely the most appropriate time to launch an anti-drink crusade : the Father, in fairness to himself, should at least have waited until the next morning. As it was, he gave up in disgust and, turning to me, began to describe the evil effects of drink on the Lithuanian peasant.

Although I realized that cognac, vodka and krupnikas did not flow every day at a farmer's dinner table as it was flowing, harmlessly enough, just then, I knew well enough that there was much in what the Father said. Drunkenness is an evil in the Baltic States, as it is elsewhere, and it becomes worse as you go north ; only the day before I had suffered from a dissolute old lady who, quite drunk, had sat next to me in a crowded Kaunas tram-car, and I had agreed with a Lithuanian friend who ejaculated, " How she scents ! " as he edged away.

I listened to the Father deferentially.

" If I had my way I would root drink out of the world," he declared passionately, glaring at my glass of krupnikas from under his bushy eyebrows.

" I quite agree with you, sir," I began diplomatically. " I——"

Then, across the table, came the voice of the irrepressible Bagdonas.

" Pour la dernière, dernière fois," he cried in his laborious French, as he raised his glass. " À votre petite fille ! "

It was an awkward moment. I felt that I was losing the Father's good opinion of the English race as I honoured the toast, but tried to compromise by setting down my glass half full.

The hospitable Bagdonas, however, was insatiable.

" Jusqu'au fond," he demanded, pointing an accusing finger at the glass amidst applause.

There was nothing for it. The rest of that krupnikas had to go. But the good Father could stand no more. To him our merry party was an orgy. He rose in dudgeon, left the table and marched into the next room where later Madame mollified his outraged feelings with a biscuit and a glass of milk.

For ourselves, we finished our banquet with a glass of beer each, which seemed rather an anti-climax after the noble krupnikas. All this time I had not been learning very much about Lithuanian farming, though I had been learning a great deal about Lithuanian farmers. But then my host insisted that I must see his pigs.

Whether it was the combined effect of the cognac, vodka, krupnikas and beer, or whether, being alone with me, his shyness deserted him, I shall never know ; but he broke out suddenly into English, as he explained how the Government had imported Yorkshire Large Whites into Lithuania. He showed me a pair of pure ones, bred in the country, and also those that were the offspring of the English and the Lithuanian strain ; the difference was marked, the mixed breed being more leggy and longer in the snout, but all seemed thriving and I learnt that the Large White strain is spreading rapidly all over the country and giving the greatest satisfaction to the farmers. As I found later, those Yorkshire sows were the only English things with which the Lithuanian farmer had an intimate—or even passing—acquaintance and it seemed not a little touching that those honoured exiles should be the cement of Anglo-Lithuanian friendship.

§ 3

After another meal of biscuits and milkless tea, we bade our kind host good-bye and set off for another farm a few miles away, dropping the Father, who had now recovered his equanimity, on the way.

This farm was the property of Mr. Belskis. Both he and Mr. Kriauciunas occupied much the same position as our well-to-do farmers (for even in England well-to-do farmers do exist, though they would be the last to admit it) and Mr.

Belskis closely resembled the English type : stocky, robust, bright of eye, with a dark drooping moustache, and slightly uncomfortable in his best clothes.

Here again we were ushered into the sitting-room reserved for guests. I would much rather have gone into the kitchen where, I knew, both my host and I would have been more at home. But ceremony is a stern mistress and so instead we sat upon red plush chairs that stood upon a very new Brussels carpet, glancing alternately at an oleograph of " The Gleaners " and an enormously enlarged photograph of our host in his younger days. Once again I was irresistibly reminded of England and English farm-houses. There was the same table, with lace cloth and albums, in the middle of the room ; the same lace curtains, half hiding the pots of geraniums in the windows ; the same fancy hold-all for waste paper upon the wall. There was only the huge white tiled stove and the golden pinewood ceiling to remind me I was in a foreign land.

Having made a little polite conversation, we were taken round the farm and outbuildings, picking our way through the mud, into which I, dodging the farm tripe-hound after a well-meaning but fruitless effort to conciliate it, floundered over my shoes. That dog was the only animal I have not been sorry to see on a chain.

It was interesting to find how self-supporting every Lithuanian farm is. Butter, cheese, bread, krupnikas—everything is made on the premises—even the sheets and table-cloths : we were shown the primitive flax machine, in which the Prefect macerated some raw flax for my benefit with great good humour and no little skill.

We got back to the house to find another meal waiting. It was now six and we had not finished the last banquet until nearly four. But everyone else seemed ready for it and one could not well refuse. Our host's wife was away in Kaunas—on a visit to the dentist—but as we entered the dining-room two daughters of the house greeted us, and then ministered to our needs. There was more sausage, cheese and honey ; more split chickens and great chunks of ox-tail. Also there was more cognac and vodka, and more, ever more,

krupnikas. At three o'clock I had been famished. At half-past six I felt as though I could never eat again. Such, erratic but nevertheless thorough, is Lithuanian hospitality.

At seven o'clock it was pouring, as it had been at intervals all day. The chauffeur appeared and said he did not care to face the road to Kaunas. I thought of one or two perilous places, especially of a detour where we had stuck even in the daylight, and agreed with him. Miss Gudovicaite agreed with him. The Prefect and the Bank Manager agreed with him. Only Bagdonas demurred. We suspected that he wanted to administer a bottle to his infant son, but the aspirations of a doting father were overruled. It was decided that where we had dined we should sleep.

Our host seemed quite unperturbed at the prospect of housing five extra people, and we made a move to a large room upstairs which seemed to run the length of the house and to be used for rare recreation. There was a grand piano there. I persuaded the girls to sing some Lithuanian folk-songs. By this time a few neighbours had come in, some of whom spoke English, and soon we had some lively Lithuanian dances. One, a kind of merry barn-dance, did not take me long to pick up, under the expert tuition of my partner, nor yet a valse with variations in which at a shout from the leader all the couples joined hands and danced round in a circle, as in the Lancers ; then one seized the girl on one's left as a new partner and the process was repeated until one had danced with each in turn.

When tired of dancing, all joined together and without music sang the old songs. And as I listened I thought of a little village I knew in Carnarvonshire where, night after night, by the old stone bridge the men and girls come together and sing the Celtic songs under the stars.

Our host, pressing upon me a glass of Lithuanian cider, broke in on my reflections and at midnight we descended to another meal of sausage, cheese and honey—and of course the inevitable krupnikas. Then Bagdonas, long since completely reconciled to his enforced absence from his infant son, started the Lithuanian drinking-songs. Again and again we sang them, until I had learnt the choruses by

heart, and the girls sang as lustily as the men. Our host, though I fancied he was longing for his bed, was amazingly good-humoured. Gone now was the likeness to the English farmer. As he sat at the head of his board dispensing large-hearted hospitality he seemed, for all his strange clothes, the reincarnation of one of the captains of Gediminas or Vytautas, his warriors gathered round him quaffing the honey-mead and singing their songs in the castle hall.

Not till two o'clock did we cease, the last piece of sausage eaten and the last glass of krupnikas drained. Then the visitors drove off in a buggy drawn by two fine horses and I was shown into the drawing-room, where a bed had been set ready for me. There I slept until the flies woke me in the dawn.

And when we parted from our good friends I was not allowed to go away empty-handed for, as we said good-bye, the Prefect pressed into my hands a bottle wrapped up in a Lithuanian newspaper. Needless to say it contained krupnikas.

"So that your friends in England may know what our national drink is like," he said, beaming with the joy of giving.

It says something for my careful packing, and nothing for the efficiency of several Customs services, that the bottle eventually found its way to my dining-room intact.

§ 4

I have described the personal side of my visit to these two farms not only because I, in common with most of the world, am more interested in people than in things, but because I hope that, being typical to many another visit, they will show something of the friendly, hospitable and happy spirit of the dwellers in that land of chequered history.

For the Lithuanians are a happy people. As it seemed to me, passing them on the road or talking to them in their homes, happiness was their dominating characteristic, whether they were farmers or whether they were peasants. They loved to sing and a smile was ever ready for their lips.

They were gay, not like men and women who have never known a care, but like those who have seen trouble, faced it —and won.

They have reason to be happy. They have gained their liberty. That is much, but not all, for freedom does not necessarily mean happiness. What is more is that the foundation of the Republic gave them back not only their liberty but their land.

The Lithuanians have always been an agricultural people, but before the war 80 per cent of the agricultural population was landless and half the total area of the country was in the hands of large estate owners. These owners were Poles, Polonized Lithuanians, Russians, and sometimes even Germans, French or Italians who had acquired their rights by purchase. These entailed estates, which were known as *majorats*, had originally belonged either to the Lithuanian State or to Lithuanian owners, and had been awarded to Russian subjects by the Tsar for distinguished services—a very convenient method of discharging obligations.

Now Lithuanians had never admitted the Tsar's right to parcel out their land as he thought fit, and after the Proclamation of Independence these estates, together with those belonging to the former Peasants' and Nobles' Land Banks, and lands of private owners who possessed more than two hundred acres, were nationalized, the largest and most neglected being taken first—and it may here be noted that during the war a third of the land belonging to the large estates had fallen fallow. The forest area, about one million acres, was retained by the State for commercial exploitation, while the agricultural areas, some million and a half acres, was divided among the landless.

Naturally enough, this action provoked an outcry from the estate owners, but it is difficult to see what other course the Government could have taken. Indeed, with the exception of the landowners themselves, who had not been able to return a representative to Parliament, all parties in the State, even the Social Democrats who in theory are opposed to the principle of private ownership of land, were agreed as to the necessity for nationalization. The land

hunger of the peasants was too insistent to be denied. Had the Government attempted to deny it, in all probability a revolution would have been provoked and the landless peasants would have thrown in their lot with the Bolsheviks.

Moreover, during the Bolshevik menace in 1919 the Government had been compelled to make promises to the landless, and it was mainly owing to these promises that the country had been united against the common danger. In the nature of things it was not likely that the agricultural population would have come forward to defend the estates of the landed proprietors, who were mainly foreigners, for they would have been doing no more than driving out one oppressor to reinstate another. As it was, the promise of the land their hearts desired gave them something to fight for, and they fought with passionate conviction in the right of their cause. If they were not defending their land they were defending what was soon to be theirs: and once the Bolshevik danger was passed, any Government that had attempted to evade its obligations would have received short shrift, and the landed-proprietors would have lost their estates just the same. Nothing could have saved them.

As it was, the Agrarian Reform in Lithuania, besides saving the country from Bolshevism, has created a happy and contented agricultural population. The properties have been parcelled out among the landless peasants—most of them demobilized soldiers, but only those who got their living from the land were eligible—in lots of from twenty to fifty acres, according to the fertility of the soil, smaller supplementary lots being given to proprietors who had already some land but not enough to give them a living. The completion of this land revision will naturally take time, but the Government expects eventually to settle thirty-five to forty thousand families on the land, and by the end of 1924 no less than twenty-two thousand new farms had been created. For this land a small payment is expected, on easy terms, but wounded soldiers and families of men who have fallen in defence of their country are given free grants, while all ex-soldiers receive, besides their farms, grants of timber for building purposes.

The entailed and feudal estates were confiscated without compensation, but the private owners, of whom about three thousand were affected, had some provision made for them; usually they have been allowed to retain the "centre"—that is to say, their houses and outbuildings, together with two hundred acres—and are to receive compensation at a pre-war price. Only estates belonging to proprietors or their successors who fought against Lithuania either with Bermondt or in the Polish Army have been confiscated without compensation, and the buildings, together with some of the land, have been retained by the State as agricultural colleges, model and experimental farms or other public institutions. In fact, drastic as this reform may seem in England, Lithuania has, as will be seen later, been more moderate than either Latvia or Estonia.*

§ 5

Wherever I went in Lithuania I saw the results of this agrarian reform. Everywhere fresh fields were coming under cultivation, everywhere new farm-houses were being built. A nation was setting to work again. And since the true national life of the people is to be found on those little farmsteads, so dearly won, it seemed to me worth while to find out exactly how the Lithuanian peasant lived.

Like all farmers, he arranges his days in accordance with the seasons. In summer he is out in his fields by four o'clock in the morning and does two hours' work before eating a light meal of bacon, or of butter and cheese with rye bread, which he either takes with him or has brought out to him by the children. Having eaten this, he works on till eight or nine, when he goes home for the principal meal of the day, a hot breakfast of *borsch*—boiled cabbage and pork—with unpeeled potatoes, followed by pancakes of potato-flour or soup made from boiled barley and milk.

After a short rest, he is out in the fields again until twelve or one, when he returns for dinner, which consists of the remains of breakfast warmed up, preceded or followed by sour milk—that universal dish of Eastern Europe, so

* See pp. 156, 229.

delicious to those who have acquired its taste and so nauseating to those who haven't.

After dinner the peasant takes a rest of an hour or so. At four o'clock another light meal, similar to the first of the day, is taken out to him in the fields and he returns between eight and nine for supper—boiled potato soup, or boiled barley, with milk, or small cakes of rye or wheat boiled in milk. After supper he smokes his birchwood pipe and has a talk at the door of his log cabin, but by ten he is in bed. There are no eight-hour days in Lithuania, for the simple reason that there is too much to be done.

On Sundays the early and the afternoon meals are omitted and the other three are made more substantial. On Wednesdays and Saturdays cheese is generally eaten instead of pork, and on Fridays, the fast day, pork is also omitted, or perhaps, instead of milk and vegetables, fresh fish or preserved herring is eaten with turnips, beetroot, mushrooms, or dried fruit: the fish being served with oil made from the seeds of poppies, sunflowers or hemp.

In winter the household rises between five and six. By lamplight the men set to rope-making, hand-threshing or making straw into well-shaped bundles that will be used for thatch. The women begin the day by weaving, and then give the pigs and poultry their morning meal, while the men attend to the cattle and horses. Breakfast, as in summer the chief meal of the day, is eaten between seven and nine, and then, while the women are busy with their household duties, the men go off to the woods for fuel, mix fodder for the cattle and water the animals, breaking with axes the ice that has formed on the ponds during the night. Dinner is between twelve and one, and in the afternoon the animals receive their third meal, while after four o'clock, when it is too dark to work outside, the men employ the rest of the evening by making, from soft woods such as elm, willow, birch or maple, the wooden clogs that are the universal wear, and the women turn to weaving again.

On days of festivities such as weddings, christenings and birthdays, no work is done and baked geese, ducks, chickens roast veal, pork or beef are added to the menu, together with

many cakes. Funerals are also the occasion for more elaborate meals, but the Catholic feast days are usually combined with the market days and then the family generally takes its food, in the shape of smoked meat and bread, with it to be eaten at inns, where parties are formed and vodka and beer can be bought.

On working days, however, water is the usual drink, or perhaps cider, made from dried apples or pears. A good deal of coffee is drunk, but tea is generally reserved for holidays.

Although in Kaunas accommodation is scarce enough there is no housing shortage in the country, nor is there ever likely to be, for plenty of material is available and the settler himself is his own master-builder. The logs he buys from the Government, since timber on all properties exceeding twenty acres belongs to the State. The logs are roughly squared and laid one on top of the other with moss or linen waste between ; before the war the bare logs formed the walls and the floor was of simple clay, but nowadays the walls are often of plaster and the floors of planks.

The plan of the houses, however, remains much the same. It is simple enough. The one-story building is divided into two parts, the first being a guest-room for the entertainment of visitors, with an adjoining room to sit in—equivalent to our " front parlour," while in the other is the kitchen, the work-room and the dining-hall, which is also used as a sitting-room. There are plank beds in the dining-room for the men, while the girls sleep in the work-room or in the granaries. In the poorer houses there are no guest-chambers, whereas in the homes of the richer farmers there are bedrooms attached to both parts of the house. In the summer time the boys sleep in the hay or perhaps with the horses.

The houses are roofed with thatch or wooden shingles, and one of the most characteristic things about these roofs is that they have always a wooden ladder laid upon them. This serves two purposes—to ascend the roof quickly if sparks set the thatch alight, or to clean the chimney, an operation which is performed not by pushing brushes up

but by dropping down a stone tied to a branch of fir. Fires are not so frequent as one might imagine, for the stoves and chimneys are made of puddled clay. In the smaller houses (and as one goes east and the soil becomes poorer, the houses become poorer too) there is no chimney either of clay or brick, and the smoke escapes simply from a hole in the roof.

In western Lithuania the peasants are in the habit of living in separate farms, while in the east they still live, like the gregarious Jews, in small villages, often owning the land in common. The reason for this is that in the eastern part of the country the Russian influence was always stronger than in the west (where the peasant learnt something of German methods) and had never broken away from the feudal system under which the large landowner made his serfs live close together, since he did not want them to spread over his land.

§ 6

Such is the daily round of the Lithuanian peasant. He has a life of hard and incessant toil to win a living from the land. Yet, as I saw evidence every day, he is happy. His hunger for land is appeased. Hard work he does not mind, since from childhood he has known little else.

For the life of the Lithuanian has never had many interludes of play, as one would see soon enough if one could follow it year by year from cradle to the grave.

The first important event in the Lithuanian child's life is naturally the christening, which, if the baby is healthy, usually takes place on the day after its birth, and is the usual Roman Catholic ceremony, to which all friends and neighbours are invited. The Lithuanian Church does not recognize the old pagan names, but these are very dear to the peasants' hearts : so they compromise and, having given their daughters such names as Anne, Mary or Madeleine they feel at liberty to add the Lithuanian Dana (the gift), Aldona (gifted with all), Biruté (after the consort of the Grand Duke Keistutis), Ruta (the national plant), Grazuté (beautiful), Giedruté (fair) ; while the Johns, Georges and Josephs are given one of the high-sounding names of the heroic Grand Dukes—Vytautas, Keistutis or Algirdas.

Lithuanian mothers usually nurse their children for at least a year, sometimes for two, and after the second or third week the baby's legs are wrapped in soft linen cloth to prevent them becoming bandy; these wrappings are kept on until the child begins to stand. Its cradle, made of young pine roots interlaced, is suspended by four ropes from a pole that is attached horizontally to the ceiling at one end and in the middle, the result being that the cradle, instead of rocking to and fro, rocks up and down, which, as a Lithuanian mother suggested to me, saved the child from being sick. It seemed as though there might be something in this. After all, one suffers less from a pitching ship than from a rolling one, and so I submit the idea to the consideration of the mothers of England. They will know better than I, but I cannot help feeling that we may be on the eve of redressing a great wrong. It is a terrible thing to think that our babies may have suffered tortures for centuries merely from being rocked the wrong way. Short of being buried alive, I can imagine no worse fate than that of being rocked to the point of sickness when one was helpless and unable to explain how one loathed it all except by yelling—and the only result of that would be that the rocker, with the best intentions in the world, would but rock harder still.

In Lithuania both boys and girls wear nothing but a long white shirt all the year round until they are five years old. They are not allowed out much in winter, but always go barefoot, even when their parents could afford to give them shoes, so that they may become hardened. When five years old the girl is given a skirt, while the boy takes to trousers, a cap, a shirt and wooden clogs. When they are seven years old they begin to do their share of the family work and look after the geese; a year later the sheep and pigs (which are sent out daily to pasture) are entrusted to them, and by the time they are nine they are considered fit to tend the cattle. About this time too they make their first confession and attend their first communion.

So essential is the work of the children considered on the farms during the summer months (in winter the animals are

kept under cover) that the National schools, at which attendance is compulsory after the child is eight, are closed from May to September. At present any change would be bitterly resented, but it is to be hoped that it may come in time, for holidays (or rather cessation of school work) for five months on end is as hard on the child as on the teacher, and a vast amount of valuable time must be wasted in recapitulation.

When he is twelve, the boy begins to learn a man's work and is taught to harness the horse, to tie up the cows in the stalls and to drive the cart. By the time he is thirteen or fourteen either his father or his elder brother shows him how to use the harrow ; a year later (by which time he will have left school) he begins to plough and to mow. But not until he is nineteen or twenty is he allowed to sow, a delicate operation when done by hand, as it still is in Lithuania, for an unskilled sower will scatter the seed too freely or too thinly, and then there will be either waste or no harvest at all.

The girls are taught simple household duties—sweeping, scrubbing and washing, when they are nine years old. Later on they begin to cook, to sew, to knit the many-coloured fingerless Lithuanian gloves, and to look after the younger children. When they are fourteen or fifteen they learn to spin and to weave, from wool or silk, the long national belts which the men wear wound several times round the waist. They also weave the household linen.

All Lithuanian women excel both in knitting and weaving, their spinning wheels and looms being made, and often elaborately carved, by the men. As soon as a Lithuanian maiden has learnt her craft, she begins to weave her dowry for herself—long rolls of cloth and linen, as well as linen towels, sheets, table-cloths and pillow-covers, to stuff which she gathers goose feathers. For when she marries she has to provide her husband not only with the household linen but with all his underclothes—shirts, socks and woollen vests—as well, since on marriage he gives his own up to his father or his younger brothers.

From twenty-five to thirty is the usual age for a man to

marry, for a girl twenty. Both have freedom of choice, but the consent of the parents is essential, and if that is withheld it would be necessary for the young pair to leave the family circle and renounce all claims to inheritance. The ceremony before betrothal is quite elaborate and must be rather embarrassing to a shy young man—and what young man really cares to do his courting in public? He meets a girl at a market, let us suppose, falls in love with her and, like a dutiful son, asks his parents' consent before he ascertains her feelings. Once the consent is given, he gets to business. An uncle, or some other relative of mature years, is pressed into service as a go-between; the two mount their horses, and, taking a bottle of vodka with them, set out for the house of the girl. On arrival the uncle announces that they are travellers; "we are looking for a good housekeeper," he says, "and we have heard that there is a chance of finding one under this roof."

At the approach of the young man etiquette decrees that the girl, who knows well enough what his errand is, must hide herself. After his preliminary announcement the uncle gets down to brass tacks with the girl's father. If they do not favour the idea of the suggested alliance the parents observe politely that there is plenty of time, and they refrain from drinking the vodka he has brought. If, however, the young man meets with their approval they drink the vodka and call in their daughter. Here she is allowed full liberty of action: if she does not fancy the suitor as a husband she does not appear; if, however, she approves of him she comes in when called, but modestly replies to her parents' questions, "I will think it over."

In the old days the go-between was a kind of showman for the would-be bridegroom; he expatiated on his virtues and on the magnificence of his worldly goods.

"He has splendid horses; he has many cattle," he would declaim, "and all his house lacks is a mistress." To which the damsel would sententiously reply, "There are many birds in the world, and many plants: I would like to find a good one."

The wedding itself is, of course, the usual Catholic

A LITHUANIAN BUTTER-MAKER

ceremony, but although the custom of decorating the girl with a crown of *ruta*, the sign of maidenhood, which is removed by the bridegroom's mother the morning after the wedding, is dying out, the festivities still last three days at the house of the bride and then three days in the house of the bridegroom.

The marriage of the son who is to succeed his father—he need not necessarily be the eldest—makes a great change in the life of the little farm, for before the ceremony takes place the father transfers the ownership to his son, arranging that he shall pay certain shares to his brothers and sisters. After the marriage the young man and his wife become master and mistress of the farm. The bridegroom's younger brothers and sisters stay in the house ; in time the girls marry and go away, while the boys go out into the world to make a living in the towns as artisans, or perhaps as doctors or lawyers ; if they have been educated to a profession or a trade they are not entitled to receive any share of the farm from the son who succeeds.

The old people retire, as it were, though the father may reserve the right to keep a couple of cows, a few sheep, pigs and fowls, and of course they live on at the farm until their death, receiving food and shelter, both working hard or easily as they please. This system seems to result in longevity, for in Lithuania to-day there are several hundred centenarians, and one old lady is said to be over one hundred and thirty.

The young wife at once takes her share in the life of the farm, and becomes responsible for the care of the poultry, the vegetables and the fruit garden. She sells the eggs, butter and milk, and also the linen she weaves, using the money thus obtained as she pleases—on household necessaries, clothes or in providing deposits for her children. Her husband sells the cattle and corn and with the income pays the wages and taxes or buys agricultural implements. Neither food nor clothes are serious items of expenditure, for nearly all are produced in the home.

When he goes to market a good husband always allows his wife to accompany him, and even if he enters an inn to

drink with a party of friends she will come with him. She is no mere drudge, the Lithuanian farmer's wife, though she works as hard as her husband ; she can possess property in her own right and dispose of it as she will ; and her husband consults her on all important matters, which are settled by mutual agreement.

The average family is about five, though ten is not an unusual number ; owing to the spread of knowledge of contraceptive methods, however, the tendency is for families to become smaller, and this state of affairs is strongly resisted by the Church.

§ 7

As may be readily imagined, the Lithuanian peasants have little enough time for play, particularly at the present time when they are starting life again and there is so much to be done. Singing, music and dancing are the main forms of recreation, while in the winter evenings the asking of riddles is a never-ending source of amusement. Here are a few typical examples :

What is it that goes in the morning on four legs, in the noon on two, and in the evening on three ?—Man.

What is it that has five chambers and one door ?—A glove.

What is it whose outside is cold, whose inside hot ; whose head is hot, whose feet cold ?—A door.

In winter brother, in summer earth.—The fire-place.

Who are those two brothers who run away from two others that can never catch them ?—The wheels of a cart.

All such riddles are not, of course, purely Lithuanian, many being as international as some of the current superstitions. For example, a horseshoe nailed over the threshold is believed to bring good luck, but it is unlucky to meet a hare upon the road. Planting must be done when the moon is young, so that the crops will wax with the moon ; in the same way, if you cut your nails in the new moon they will grow faster than if cut when the moon is full. A belief in the evil eye is common, and if bitten by a snake a peasant will

go to a reputed witch for a spell to cure the wound, while during a thunderstorm no one will go to a window for fear of attracting the lightning, but will ring a bell and then light the lamps as a protection ; if a horse should become thin it is necessary to find a mole and to stroke it from tail to head, when the horse will immediately begin to grow sleek and fat.

Sometimes the old superstitions are mixed with more modern beliefs. For instance, if the house catches fire it is necessary to throw over it some of the bread baked on St. Anne's Day, small pieces of which have been taken to church and kept in case of emergency ; if a farmer wants to see his horses in good condition he must kill an owl on Xmas Eve and fasten it over the stable door ; and it is dangerous for anyone to fish on Sunday, lest he should catch the devil.

## CHAPTER IV

## DOWN THE NEMUNAS

A companionable journalist—A primitive paddle-steamer—Rafts of pine logs—An accommodating skipper—The oldest church in Lithuania—Historical associations—Gediminas Hill—Remnants of paganism—A story of the Creation—The ancient gods—Pagan priests—The cradle of the race—Smalininkai—German influence—Western kultur and Eastern lethargy—By train to Klaipeda—An offensive Prussian—Conditions in Lithuania Minor.

### § 1

I DO not suppose any traveller has ever left the Hotel Metropole at Kaunas with much regret. I certainly did not. The servants are dour and insolent, the service is bad—it is impossible to get anything to eat or drink before eight o'clock in the morning—and I was asked to pay five shillings for a bath. It was a bore having to obtain mineral water to clean one's teeth in, and my bed was so hard that I had to transfer the eiderdown to the mattress. I have been told that the hotel is incomparably better than it was in Russian days, but further improvements could be made without difficulty, and the Government would do well to encourage travellers to come to this little-known and interesting land which is but two nights' journey from London.

Moreover, Lithuania is on the whole an inexpensive country in which to travel, and the food even at the Metropole, though indifferent and badly served, was reasonable in price. One could have a three-course lunch, including a glass of light beer, for about 1s. 6d., while a supper of cold ham, tomatoes, cakes, coffee and beer, cost no more than 2s.; and added to this was a band which played in a kind of minstrels' gallery till midnight, whether anyone was in the room or not.

I had come to Kaunas alone and I left it with a friend.

This was Mr. Matas Solcius, a prominent Lithuanian journalist and political correspondent of the daily paper *Lietuva*. During my stay he had shown and taught me many things, and when the time came for me to pass on to Lithuania Minor—the Klaipeda Territory—he suggested accompanying me on my trip down the Nemunas. A better travelling companion in a foreign country than a journalist would be hard to find, for he sees things with the eye of a trained observer and, from the experience of his own profession, he knows just those things that are of interest to the passer-by. So I accepted his proposal readily, and one sunny July morning a drosky rattled me away from the Metropole in company with him and his little daughter, Dana, a most attractive person who curtsied delightfully when she was introduced.

At the landing-stage near the church of Vytautas (it is so typical of Lithuania that a church should be named after a pagan prince) we boarded a primitive paddle-steamer, the *Vaidyla*—Lithuanian for pagan priest. She was a craft with a history, for she had been sunk in mid-stream by the Russians to prevent her falling into the hands of the enemy and in the vain hope of blocking the river and so retarding the German advance. Since the war she had been raised, but we encountered some of her sisters on our journey down-stream in various stages of submersion.

I do not think punctuality is regarded as a virtue in Lithuania. Trains certainly start more or less on time, but nothing else does. People seem to be invariably late for meals and appointments ; even my good friend Solcius had often kept me waiting half an hour—but the next day, as if to make amends, would appear half an hour before I expected him. So I was not surprised that the *Vaidyla* did not start according to schedule, though I had gone without breakfast lest I should be late myself.

In her own good time she began to make her way down the muddy river that streams along between low grassy banks with many a sandpit. Every now and then she would go alongside a plank landing-stage to pick up or set down passengers, who were mostly Jews and included a venerable

(but rather dirty) Rabbi. Sometimes we slowed down even in mid-stream to take aboard passengers that had put out in boats.

So we came to the Neveza, one of the many tributaries of the Nemunas. Its name is a warning, "Do not drive through," and the river acquired it from the fate of a Lithuanian noble who was in such haste to visit his lady-love in Kaunas that, rather than make a detour, he bade his coachman drive through the river, with fatal results. So to-day the Neveza flows on, a warning to impatient lovers. On the hill above it stands Castle Raudondvaris—Red Castle—so called because, like so many old Lithuanian castles and churches, it is built entirely of red brick. I had paid a visit to it while staying at Kaunas, and it impressed me both because of its noble red tower that overlooks the river and because it was the first nationalized estate I had seen. For the glorious park, the woods that slope steeply to the river, flower gardens, the cement tennis-court, even the private chapel on the hill that was bombarded and destroyed during the war, all have been taken over by the Government. The outbuildings were occupied by an artillery unit for summer training; only the castle and a few acres remained to the owner of that splendid heritage. The principle was right, inevitable, as I have shown, but sadness seemed to brood over that empty castle like a great bird.

Our little steamer passed on. It was a glorious sunny day and very pleasant sitting on the deck. We overhauled great flat-bottomed river-boats loaded with wood, and once passed a couple of mighty rafts of pine logs lashed together, which had come drifting down from the forests far up country; the raftsmen steered them with great wooden rudders and lived in little grass shelters on the rafts themselves. I wanted a photograph of them, but we were travelling fast.

"There will be more," declared Solcius consolingly. "I will see the Captain. He will slow down for you next time."

He betook himself to the bridge. I saw the Captain scowl. Then he looked my way, nodded and beamed and shouted something in Lithuanian.

" It is all right," Solcius assured me as he returned. " As soon as I told the Captain who you were he was very pleased. ' I will do anything for an Englishman,' he said."

I wondered if the captain of a steamer running from Reading to Windsor would have said as much to a Lithuanian. And the worst of it all was that we never passed another raft.

§ 2

But there was much else to hold our interest. It was not long before I spied the quaint old church of Zapyskis, said to be the first Christian church in Lithuania, whose steeply sloping roof makes the rest of the building look as though it had sunk into the ground. This indeed is the native tradition, as I had heard on a former visit, for the church was built by Vytautas in 1420 (in deference to his wife, who had become converted) on the site of an ancient pagan shrine ; this outraged the feelings of Perkunas, who sent a storm raging over the countryside, so that half the church was swallowed up. And they say, too, that after the church had been built a stag came swimming across the Nemunas with a brass eikon between its antlers. This eikon was hung up in the church, where it remains to this day, together with the antlers of the stag which was kept by the church until it died.

Traces of the pagan shrine can still be seen beneath the altar, and the pagan idols are said to be buried under the square-bricked porch. I longed for a pick and permission to do a little archæological research work of my own.

Close by the church—which is no longer used—runs a holy stream which, owing to the peculiar formation of the ground, appears to run up-hill. It is hardly surprising that it should have some marvellous cures to its credit, and I was told of one old lady whose deafness had been miraculously cured by its waters, for after not being able to hear the thunder for fifty years she can now, good luck to her, hear the whisper of a leaf.

Soon after we left Zapyskis we came to a little township where a large market was in progress ; on either

bank were hundreds of the long Lithuanian carts and—since there are no bridges below Kaunas—a ferry, as packed with humanity as a London tram on a Saturday night, was plying to and fro. This was Vilkija, which means The Gathering of the Wolves. The little town, which is on the right bank of the river, got its name owing to the dense forests which once surrounded it. Its red-brick neo-Gothic church rises with double steeples that were roofed—as Solcius suggested—with English zinc, disguised as German. This was apparently a sore point with my companion, for he himself had lately bought some galvanized iron with which to roof his house at Kaunas and, on scraping off the German imprint on it, had found the name of a Glasgow firm beneath.

Before the war Vilkija was the chief centre of the timber business in Lithuania, for the town has a big hinterland and was a convenient outlet to Kaunas and farther Lithuania. Here Russian and German merchants used to meet and transact their business, but now the centre has shifted to Smalininkai, our day's destination.

Nevertheless, we saw frequent sawmills at work on either bank and the pine forests broke the monotony of the level landscape. Many flocks of geese we passed too, tended by barefooted maidens who reminded me of the goose girls in the fairy-tales; a herd of black and white cattle were watering in the river.

Often, too, we saw little parties of men and women bathing, in separate groups, without a stitch of clothing. I had already noticed this custom when wandering along the banks of the river at Kaunas, where in the evening you may see, in groups fifty yards apart, men and women bathing in a state of nature and promenading in the same condition afterwards with Japanese indifference to conventions accepted in Western Europe, that insist on even young children wearing clammy "bathing costumes." Solcius explained to me that this was the universal custom in Lithuania. "It is so that the men shall not so easily be teased," he said, and it seemed to me that our Sunlight League might do worse than send out a commission to study Lithuanian methods.

§ 3

All these little towns and villages on the banks of the Nemunas played a great part in the national regeneration. In those days communication by road and railway was not easy and the river formed, as it does still, a convenient method of transit. It carried actors, writers and lecturers to the people who lived upon its banks, and to arouse the national consciousness plays, representations from legends and performances of National history, were held in the barns to promote enthusiasm for the Lithuanian customs and language.

All this country, too, is prolific of historical associations, for it was the scene of many a hard-fought battle between the Lithuanian nobles and the Teutonic knights in olden days. Seredzius, at the confluence of the Nemunas and the Dubysa, the mouth of which was barred by logs to catch the timber that was being floated down, is the reputed birthplace of the Lithuanian grand dukes. When the Teutonic Order had obtained a footing in the country, it was here that the knights built a fortress to control the traffic of both rivers, and it was here, too, in 1914, that the Russians beat off a three-days' attack from the Germans, and held them until nearly a year later, when they effected a crossing and advanced on Kaunas along both banks of the Nemunas. The church, like so many other buildings in Lithuania, had been destroyed by the Russians lest it should be made use of by the enemy as an observation post—for it stood on the hill—and since the war it has been rebuilt, but without the double steeples that are so characteristic of the countryside.

A mile or so down-stream is Ilguva, named after Ilgis, the last of the Lithuanian pagan priests, who lived at the end of the seventeenth century. Here, sitting in the lowest branches of the sacred oak, and clad in nothing but a wolf-skin, he defied the new order and taught his people the mysteries of the pagan faith.

The country between Seredzius and Veliuona, which stands below Ilguva, is regarded as the best-preserved field

for Lithuanian language and customs. Veliuona itself is a store-house of memories for every patriotic Lithuanian. Here is the famous hill of Gediminas, where that fine old warrior-prince defended his castle against the invading Crusaders. It was said that in this encounter the Teutonic knights used firearms against the Lithuanians for the first time, and Gediminas himself was hit, and was buried under the curiously shaped hill which stands up like a tumulus from the river bank. It seemed strange to see a Christian cross marking the resting-place of the great pagan leader. But I had long since learnt that the Lithuanians are not consistent about these things, and at least there has been a Christian church in Veliuona since 1421.

§ 4

Christian symbol on pagan hill, pagan fire before lighted cross: this strange contrast is so insistent in Lithuania even to-day that it is worth while to say something of this ancient faith to which the Lithuanians clung long after the peoples of Western and Southern Europe had accepted Christianity.

It was, in fact, a branch of the Aryan religion, and Lithuanian mythology is not far removed from that of the Scandinavians and the ancient Greeks. The world was looked upon as a single creation and its soul, or life-giver, was Vieshpats, who is the counterpart of Jehovah. Vieshpats lived in a small house far away in the sky, but although it was a humble home and no bigger than a peasant's, all inside was gold and light.

Vieshpats created the world and the first human beings, who were known to the Lithuanians as Diedukas and Bobuté—the Old Man and the Old Woman. The story goes that Diedukas had a pea-seed and Bobuté the seed of a lima-bean. These seeds, which are still regarded as the emblems of the male and female sex, were planted by the ancestors of the human race (for reasons best known to themselves) under their bed, and soon they began to grow at an amazing rate. They drove a hole through the bed, then through the house roof and so grew up to heaven.

Diedukas and Bobuté, greatly daring, climbed up the magic stalks until they came to the country in the sky where Vieshpats dwelt. Vieshpats allowed them to stay in his house.

" You may sleep by the stove," he told them graciously, " but whatever you do, you must not meddle with my dough which is in the oven."

They promised to obey, but that night Bobuté could not sleep ; she woke her husband and demanded food (so inconsiderate are sleepless wives) and he, to pacify her, uncovered the bowl of dough, which then started to run across the floor and out of the house. Bobuté ran after it, but could not stop it, yet at midnight it returned of its own accord.

Vieshpats was vexed with his pair of mortals next morning, and that night he put them to sleep in his barn, this time forbidding them to touch his cart. But once again curiosity proved too strong for them and Bobuté got into the cart, which began to run about the barn of its own accord until midnight, while at the same time there was thunder and lightning upon earth.

On the following night Vieshpats made the unruly couple sleep out in the garden and this time warned them against picking his apples. Once again, however, temptation was too strong for them, but as soon as they touched the apples all the fruit began to fall upon the ground, until the trees were bare. Upon this, Vieshpats could stand no more of his turbulent people and he told them they must go back to earth. But when they came to look for the magic stalks they found them vanished, so they set to and made long ropes from the stalks of corn and then started on their downward journey. But the ropes were too short and reached only to the clouds ; in desperation then Diedukas and Bobuté let go and dropped through space, luckily landing in a swamp, where they were buried up to their necks in mud.

" Alas," wailed Bobuté, " I cannot stir hand or foot, and you are in the same plight. How are we to get out ? "

Then her husband gave her an answer which leads me to think he must have had Irish blood in his veins.

"Wait awhile," cried he gallantly, "I'll go home and get my spade and dig the pair of us from the mud."

After Vieshpats had created the earth, the sun, moon and stars appeared in the world: they too were deities. The sun was personified both as a goddess and as a god, but the moon was always a man, and fell in love with the morning star goddess, Aushriné, thus moving to anger Perkunas, the god of thunder, who split the moon in pieces, and that is why we see parts of it in the sky to-day.

Besides Perkunas, who seems to have been the most powerful of the Lithuanian gods, there was an earth god, Zemininks, and his consort Zemina; Patrimpas, god of water and of life on earth; and Patela, the god of the Underworld, who was the equivalent of Pluto (as Perkunas was the equivalent of Zeus) and had the goddess Giltiné as a messenger of death personified as a skeleton with a scythe.

Each god was, as it were, the Head of Department; under him he had a host of lesser deities. Under Perkunas, for example, was Shaltis, the god of frost, and Gabija, the god of fire, and even to this day a Lithuanian peasant will make the sign of the cross in the ashes of the hearth and sing a few words to Gabija to protect the house from fire, just as he will say "See, Perkunas is angry" when the lightning comes.

Each sea had its own deity, each river, each lake, each hill. There was a god of forests and a god of flowers, but each species of tree and flower had its patron too. There was a god of birds, of animals and of fishes and there again the eagle and the crow would each have its own deity, just as the sheep, the carp and the bees had theirs. It was indeed a simple personification of nature—the religion of the children of the world—but it was not confined to nature. Every trade, from tinkers to tailors, had its own god, every castle too, every town, and every district and even if a castle or town were destroyed it is said that you might still hear the god singing underground, and on rare occasions he would show himself. Lietuva was the goddess of the country, the Queen of the Nation, sometimes called Milda. They were pagan deities all of them, but they seem strangely akin to the patron saints of a later day.

The bodies of the dead were thought to go to Patela, god of the Underworld, who was described as a little old man with a long beard, but the Lithuanians believed firmly in the transmigration of souls and in the Buddhistic Wheel of Life—though they themselves, one may suppose, had never heard of Buddha. But righteous deeds meant a better life to come, and one who died in battle was believed to have the highest chances of advancement in his next reincarnation, while there is a pathetic little story of a Lithuanian maiden who, prevented from marrying her fisher lover, drowned herself that she might turn into a pike and fall into his net and so be united at last with the man she loved.

In ancient Lithuania there was a well-organized system of priests—*krivis*—who had great influence over the people ; they were brought up to the priesthood from children and were not allowed to marry ; part of their duty was to tend the snakes, toads and doves which were kept as sacred. In addition to the *krivis* was the *vaidyla*, who was a combination of priest and troubadour, travelling about the country performing the pagan rites and telling stories of deeds of olden warriors. There were also female priestesses whose duty was to tend the sacred and eternal fire upon the round stone altars, like the vestal virgins of Rome.

The pagan altars were generally set under the oak trees—those struck by lightning were considered to be specially favoured by Perkunas—and enclosed at a later age by two or sometimes three walls of brick or stone. On these altars were sacrificed kids, lambs or calves, though human victims were not unknown. Sometimes the chief priest struck the victim to the heart with a knife and gathered its blood upon a cloth, which was then burnt ; sometimes the heart, or the whole animal, was burnt, and hymns were sung after the ceremony.

§ 5

The stone altars of the pagan priests date back before the days of history, and the tumuli which are scattered along both banks of the Nemunas are a promising field for the archæologist, for doubt still exists as to their age. But

the little town of Barkas, which stands below Veliuona, has a traditional connection with the origin of the Lithuanian nation. It is said that the progenitor of the Lithuanian patricians was Palemonas ; his origin is unknown but he is believed to have come up the river from the sea—possibly he was a Roman Colonist—and founded the town of Areogula ; here he had two sons, Kaunas and Barkas, both of whom became Lithuanian dukes and founded cities of the same name, and from them sprang the Lithuanian nobility.

Below Barkas, at Skirsnemuné, the character of the river changes, as the name of the little town implies : it is wider, with lower banks, its waters are deeper and it does not flow so fast. The next town is Jurbarkas, on the River Jura (Jura in Lithuanian means "sea"), so called because in spring the river floods the surrounding country till it resembles a sea.

Here we left our paddle-steamer, since she went no farther down-stream, because the port charges at Smalininkai are prohibitive—purposely so, owing to the smuggling that is rife across the Lithuanian-German frontier : from the Lithuanian side the smugglers do a brisk business in general products such as butter and cheese for Germany, while from the German side come manufactured goods and a certain amount of cocaine, most of which eventually finds its way to Russia.

We reached Smalininkai, packed in a tiny launch, at five o'clock the same evening. We were now in the Klaipeda Territory, which before the war had been part of East Prussia. The present boundary between the Klaipeda Territory and Germany is the Nemunas, but the contrast between the old German territory and Lithuania proper is extraordinary. It is the contrast between German and Russian culture ; the contrast of tiles and brick against timber and thatch : of neatness and order : and of formal pattern and the picturesque.

It was a contrast deliberately organized before the war by the German authorities, who laid themselves out to settle near the frontier the most patriotic the most aggressive and, it must be admitted, the most capable agents (they were

mainly selected from Central Prussia) in order that they might demonstrate to the untutored Lithuanians the difference between German " kultur " and Russian lethargy. The object of these settlers was to spread German kultur to the East, to control the Border and to spy out the land beyond; their activities were subsidized and they were assisted to build farms and houses on the German model with part of the proceeds of the 1870 indemnity.

It was a commercial invasion, in the art of which no people in the world are so skilled as the Germans, and it attained the ends it had in view—the Germanification of the territory; so that even to-day Smalininkai might be a little German town, neatly and tidily laid out, clean and orderly; notices and names of streets in German, and nothing but German goods on sale in the German shops.

We stayed at a pleasant little German inn overlooking the tiny harbour, outside which, in the main-stream, were anchored a score of great timber rafts. After the Metropole at Kaunas it seemed astonishingly clean and inexpensive—the price of a room was only half a crown a day. The wife of the German proprietor was a buxom Lithuanian lady. She too, it appeared, had been Germanified and she spoke Lithuanian to Solcius (who pretended to understand no German out of devilment) with evident reluctance.

The people one saw in the streets were mostly Germans; I even saw a sight I had not seen since Germans disappeared from London in large numbers—a gentleman in a tail coat, a bowler hat and brown boots. The shopkeepers seemed friendly enough. One, on discovering that I was English, asked me to explain a matter that had been puzzling him for some days. A week or so before a couple of American destroyers had paid a visit to Klaipeda (he, of course, called it by the German name of Memel) and had gone to see them. He had met some of the sailors, who told him that the English language was quite different from American and almost impossible for them to understand. The old man had been much exercised in his mind ever since.

From Smalininkai we continued our journey by a narrow-

gauge railway which connects up with the main line from Tilsit (on the German side) at Pajegiai. I felt very ungallant as we walked to the station, for instead of a porter a strapping Lithuanian wench was produced to carry my suit-cases. The guard of the train, who was also the ticket-collector, resplendent in blue uniform, shining metal buttons and peaked cap, was obviously a Prussian. He demanded the tickets in German. Solcius immediately asked him to speak Lithuanian.

"I do not speak Lithuanian," declared the guard contemptuously. "If you cannot speak German you must speak Russian or Polish."

Solcius, who besides German, Russian and Polish spoke Lettish, Spanish, French and English, pretended not to understand and a pretty little comedy ensued, the guard becoming more and more exasperated, until a man sitting opposite, with a bright yellow cap, a black beard and a complexion between the two, intervened and translated. After the Prussian had gone a pleasant-faced woman sitting near apologized in Lithuanian for his conduct. Even Solcius could not explain why such men are employed on the Lithuanian State Railway, but his attitude was typical of the delight all patriotic Lithuanians take in getting a little of their own back after being the underdogs so long.

Nevertheless, it is quite possible that technically the man was of Lithuanian nationality, since that is acquired *ipso facto* by former German subjects who have been domiciled in the Territory since January, 1920, and as both German and Lithuanian are recognized as official languages in the Territory, he may have been within his rights. If he was, that makes such incidents even more galling to a true-born Lithuanian.

Moreover, we soon encountered other incidents no less galling. When we sat at Pajegiai in the big waiting-room which is also the refreshment room, there was nothing but the picture of the Lithuanian knight above the buffet to remind us we were not in Germany; on the news-stand there were nothing but German papers, and Dr. Jankus, an ardent Lithuanian patriot to whom Solcius presented me as

we waited for our train, looked at it and, turning to me, put his hand on his heart to show his bitterness of feeling.

Even the Hotel Victoria at Klaipeda (called, not after a British Queen, but a German Empress) which we reached that evening was run entirely on German lines—and incidentally is the most efficient in the Baltic States—while the German influence in the country is very strong. In Klaipeda itself there are more Germans than Lithuanians, but taking the population of the Territory as a whole, the Lithuanians predominate. The result of this mixture is two extreme parties—one which violently resents the Territory being taken from German control, the other intensely nationalistic. The influence of the latter is growing now that Lithuania has control, and I noticed that names of streets and railway stations, previously German, appeared with the Lithuanian form above the German, while in some instances the German name had recently been painted out and the Lithuanian substituted.

The German element is, however, active. While I was staying in Klaipeda the police discovered a German plot to seize the town, imprison the chief officials on the pilot boat in the harbour and so to declare German independence. Unfortunately for the success of this *putch*, the secret was not well kept, and the police raided a meeting of the conspirators and arrested the majority before any harm was done.

In the unoccupied part of Lithuania Major, the Lithuanians have everything their own way. In Lithuanian Minor they are getting it. But they have not got it yet, and the day of our arrival in Klaipeda registered a fresh German triumph. For Solcius discovered ruefully that the Prussian railway-guard, besides refusing to speak Lithuanian, had charged us exactly double the regulation fare.

## CHAPTER V

## IN LITHUANIA MINOR

The welcome of Rytas—Importance of Klaipeda to Lithuania—The French Commission overthrown—Lithuanian sovereignty recognized—The harbour—Railway schemes—Lack of capital—Germans capture the market—British indifference—Where amber is found—The story of the amber palace—Historical references—Visit to an amber factory—A trip down the Kurisches Haff—The Sahara of Lithuania—The legend of the Queen, the Fisherman and the Enchanted Horse—Expeditions into the country—The Grand Old Man of Lithuania—His message to the English-speaking peoples.

### § 1

ON the morning after our arrival at Kaunus, Solcius took me to the office of the *Klaipedos Zinios* and introduced me to its editor, Mr. Balys Sruoga, who is also one of the most distinguished modern Lithuanian poets, and to Mr. Saulys, the editor-in-chief of the *Zinios* and other papers. The Press in Lithuania appears to be in a healthy condition, for Klaipeda alone has, besides the daily *Zinios*, five weekly and semi-weekly periodicals in Lithuanian, while there are three German dailies—and the population of Klaipeda is about forty thousand. In Kaunas there are three dailies and eight weeklies and semi-weeklies published in Lithuanian, as well as ten monthlies and quarterlies, while there is also one Russian paper, one Polish, and no less than ten Jewish dailies, weeklies and monthlies.

The building in which the *Zinios* is situated is the head-quarters of Rytas, which, besides being an association for publishing newspapers and books is also a club and the meeting-place of all the prominent Lithuanians in the town, with a club coffee-room and bedrooms of its own in that part of the building which still belongs to the Berliner Hof Hotel.

At 11.30 luncheon was proposed. Having breakfasted late, I was not particularly hungry, but I had long since become accustomed to the vagaries of Lithuanian meals and in the coffee-room I found a distinguished gathering invited to meet me, including Mr. Jokubas Stiklorius, the Director of Rytas, a prominent worker in the cause of Lithuanian liberty, and Mr. Adam Braks, a Lithuanian artist who wore a marvellous flowing grey silk tie edged with violet. We feasted off caviare, a marvellous assortment of *hors d'œuvres* and champagne, and Dr. Stiklorius then invited me to become the guest of Rytas as long as I stayed in Klaipeda.

"You must treat our club as your home," he said, the kindness of his intentions losing nothing by his halting French. "Come when you like, go when you like. Tell us just what you want to see and, if it can be arranged, you shall see it."

Such is the hospitality of Lithuanians. It seemed to me that we had much to learn from them. For their hospitality is not of the "cutlet for cutlet" variety, but of the kind which means befriending a man you have never seen before and may never see again. That brand of hospitality you will find in the East, and in the British Dominions and Colonies. You will find it in the United States. Once you would find it in Ireland, and you will find it in Scotland still. But in England it is rare.

In Lithuania, however, it is not only customary, but goes at times to such lengths as to be embarrassing. Solcius, for example, although, as I know, not a rich man—no one in Lithuania is rich—positively refused to let me pay one lit all the way from Kaunas to Klaipeda, insisting on settling for steamer and railway fares, meals and hotel bills.

"You are an English writer," he said, beaming at me through his great round spectacles, "and I a Lithuanian writer. Therefore we are brothers. Brothers of the pen. Between brothers there can be no questions such as this. I am doing only what I know you would do for me."

And when, after a tour round Klaipeda in the motor the Governor had been kind enough to put at my disposal, and

after another meal (at three in the afternoon) of ham and eggs and white wine, the time came to say good-bye to him as he left for Kaunas, I think I positively hurt his feelings by presenting his little daughter Dana with the best box of chocolates I could find in the town.

§ 2

Klaipeda is of immense importance to Lithuania, since it is the natural outlet for the great hinterland of the Nemunas. The town itself is chiefly interesting as a contrast to Kaunas—and again the contrast between Germany and Russia. Klaipeda, indeed, is not unlike any small town in Germany. The canal which runs through it gives the place an attractive air, and where it cuts through one of the main streets is a drawbridge, which is hoisted every time a steamer passes through and so holds up traffic for a while. Here and there the wanderer will find an attractive corner—an old German sixteenth-century house with mellowed tiles, rising above the narrow cobbled street—but otherwise Klaipeda is not picturesque ; it is just an ordinary European town with electric trams, adequate shops and a few tall and hideous business houses, pointing to one of which Braks said, laughing, " Voilà le commencement de New York." The statues of Germania and of Emperor William the Great which used to stand in the town " disappeared," as someone described it to me, on the night of the insurrection and can now be seen lying in one of the back streets.

The German character of Klaipeda is not surprising when it is remembered that in 1422 Vytautas the Great ceded the Territory of Lithuania Minor to the Teutonic knights, with the object of keeping them quiet and enabling him to extend his conquests to the north and east. During and for some time after the Napoleonic wars the Territory belonged to Russia, but in 1820 it reverted to Germany by agreement and remained under Prussian domination until 1914, when the inhabitants, many of whom were of course pure Lithuanians, were forced to fight in the German Army against their compatriots, who were conscripts of the Tsar. I found, for instance, that Braks and I had both taken

part in the Macedonian campaign—only he was sitting on one side of the barbed wire and I on the other. Campaigning in Macedonia was never pleasant, but when one was fighting on the side of an army one cordially detested, as Braks was, it must have been intolerable.

For although the German influence in the Lithuanian mind is strong, it is by no means paramount. It may show itself in the outward signs of building and of agricultural methods, but it has not penetrated to the hearts of the true Lithuanians. In spite of all efforts the majority of them have not been Germanized any more than their compatriots in Lithuania Major were Russianized; the individuality of the nation has been too strong. Love of their own country animates and inspires the inhabitants of both territories, and the main difference between the two peoples is that while the inhabitants of Lithuania Major are Catholics, those of Lithuania Minor are Protestants, having come under the influence of the Lutheran Reformation when it spread eastward from Germany.

After the war one of the first thoughts of the Lithuanians was to free the Territory from Prussian domination, and strong claims for it were made at the Peace Conference. These claims were admitted by M. Clemenceau, the President of the Supreme Council, who stated, in a note dated June 16, 1919: "The district in question has always been Lithuanian, the majority of the population is Lithuanian in origin and speech, and the fact that the city of Memel itself is in large part German is no justification for maintaining the district under German sovereignty, particularly in view of the fact that the port of Memel is the only sea outlet for Lithuania."

Nevertheless, although the Territory was detached from Germany under the Peace Treaty, it was never handed over to Lithuania, owing to the opposition of Poland, supported by France, and for four years continued to be administered by German officials under a French Commission. The feeling of the Nationalists against this administration culminated in January, 1923, when a locally organized insurrection broke out. After several hours'

fighting in the streets of Klaipeda the French gave way and a Lithuanian Governor was set up.

For Lithuania this was the best possible thing that could have happened. The Conference of Ambassadors found that the question could be shelved no longer, and a Convention was drawn up whereby the Territory was recognized as an autonomous State under Lithuanian sovereignty, with a governor appointed by the Republic. Under this Convention Klaipeda became a free port and the Lithuanian Government undertook to ensure freedom of transit for traffic coming from or destined for the Territory.

This provision is extremely important, because it expressly stipulates that no obstacle shall be placed in the way of timber from Poland being floated down the Nemunas to Klaipeda.* Now the Republic has ratified this treaty, but according to information given me by a high Polish official the Lithuanian Government does not see fit to recognize its obligation under this head at the present moment, so that the transit of timber from Poland to Klaipeda is becoming increasingly difficult. By the Convention Lithuania did not gain all she had hoped for, it is true; but she gained some fifty miles of seaboard and control of her natural outlet, instead of having to be content with the inconvenient and undeveloped port of Palanga, and having set her hand to the document it is to be hoped that for her own sake she will not continue to put herself in a false position by playing the obstructionist, however bitter her feelings towards Poland may be; apart from other considerations such a course will undoubtedly imperil her transit trade, which is a valuable one, for although 80 per cent of the exports from Klaipeda consists of timber, only 20 per cent of this comes from within Lithuanian borders. Moreover, while Klaipeda is admittedly the natural outlet for a large portion of the great Polish forests it is not the only one, and if transit down the Nemunas is made difficult, the traffic will undoubtedly be diverted to Koenigsberg, which is already a powerful rival to Klaipeda as a port.

For the chief importance of Klaipeda is its harbour, which

* Annex III to the Convention, Article 3.

is a good one and stands at the neck of that curious inland sea, the Kurisches Haff, formed by a narrow sandy spit sixty miles long. Klaipeda harbour has a great chance as Lithuania's one outlet. Before the war it was of little importance, since Germany had other ports closer to the west and Riga was the chief port in the Baltic for Russia. But Klaipeda has the advantage of being open throughout the winter, except in very severe weather when the ice may close the mouth of the Haff for a day or two, and it can now accommodate ocean-going vessels drawing up to 21 feet. The Port Director told me that the harbour dues were fixed far below those of any other Baltic port, in order to attract trade.

Like everything else in Lithuania, however, the harbour needs money spending on it to complete its development. It needs grain-elevators before it can compete successfully with its neighbours Koenigsberg and Liepaja (Libau); it needs larger basins, so that ships will not have to lie out in the stream in spring and be exposed to the danger of the ice that is brought down the Nemunas; the breakwaters require extensive repairs and the port demands better railway communication with Kaunas.

Before the war the railways in Lithuania were adapted to suit Russian, not Lithuanian, needs. Russia built railways through Lithuania to communicate with western Europe and as strategical links between her western fortresses. Since the Klaipeda Territory belonged to Germany she had no interest in connecting the port with Lithuania by a good railway system, but built herself Libau in order to be independent of Klaipeda and Koenigsberg. The consequence is that Klaipeda can be reached from Kaunas only by a circuitous route by the north or south, the former line passing through Latvian territory, the latter through German.

To enable Klaipeda to obtain the bulk of the Lithuanian export and import trade and also to open up that part of the country still unserved by railways, the Government, which owns and controls the railways, has decided to build two lines, the first from Kazlu-Ruda to Smalininkai, thence

converting the narrow-gauge line to a normal gauge as far as Klaipeda; the second from Kursenai (Ameliai) to Kretinga to tap north-western Lithuania (Samogitia) which was left undeveloped by Russia. In this way every part of Lithuania will be connected by rail with its port, and so be independent of Koenigsberg and Liepaja.

This construction would have required an outlay heavier than the young State could stand and therefore Lithuania took advantage of the British Trade Facilities Act, which was passed to reduce unemployment, and allows other States to borrow from the fund of twenty millions set aside for public works, on condition that the money is spent in England on machinery and railway material. In this way she obtained a loan of one million pounds, redeemable in twenty years, on acceptable conditions, and the much-needed railway construction is being taken in hand. When finished it will have added 275 miles to Lithuania's 600 miles of normal-gauge lines, not counting 100 miles in the Klaipeda Territory.

Much else is being done for the development of Klaipeda and Lithuania in general; for example, a new wireless station is being erected under a French tender at Kaunas, but the difficulty is the shortage of money. It is lack of capital, not lack of enterprise, that is keeping Lithuania back. Owing to the failure of both Russian and German currencies there is little money to lend. What money there is naturally fetches high rates of interest. The State Bank charges 8 per cent per annum, but it, too, has only a limited amount to lend; private banks charge from 3 to 5 per cent a month—individuals as much as 10—and a prominent Klaipeda banker told me that there were long waiting lists even for loans of £25. These small borrowers are mainly farmers who wish to buy agricultural implements, and they have not only to give their farms as security, but also have to find two other persons who will make themselves responsible. All these loans are short ones—loans of more than three months are neither given nor demanded—but the banks pay as much as 12 per cent a year on deposits and are glad to get the money.

In spite of these rates, foreign capital is shy and all

foreign firms do not care even to give the usual three-months' credit, so that the traders and shopkeepers, forced to pay before delivery, have to borrow at these exorbitant rates all or part of the sum they require. This naturally sends up the price of imported articles. I was told that there is a very pronounced preference for English goods, but that owing to the more accommodating methods of German business firms, which are intent on capturing the market, the vast majority of imports came from Germany.

The result is that one sees nothing but German manufactured goods in the shops, nothing but German agricultural machines or implements on the farms. At a time when every fresh outlet for British goods means reduced unemployment, this seems a deplorable state of affairs. If British firms will not take risks the Germans take that is, one must suppose, their affair, but although a settlement of Lithuanian and Polish differences may make them adopt a less timorous attitude it is to be feared that lack of initiative has much to do with it, for I found conditions very much the same both in Latvia and Estonia—the Germans are getting the business and consolidating, while the British firms do not even take the trouble to look on.*

§ 3

Klaipeda has undoubtedly prospered since it has been under the control of Lithuania and the port traffic increases every year. Since this is so it is to be hoped that the Government will see fit shortly to revise its Customs Tariff, which is at present extravagantly high. The duty on imported tobacco, for instance, is 175 per cent (a packet of Capstan cigarettes costs 4s.) and 15s. 6d. is charged on every standard of timber as against 2s. 6d. during the German occupation. Chief among imports are superphosphates, coal, cement, hardware and machinery, while the most important exports are timber, skins, flax, eggs, fish and meat.

* The latest trade figures show, however, that Germany has lost ground recently and that now more English, Scandinavian and Czecho-Slovakian goods are being imported.

Klaipeda has one export, however, that outweighs in interest, if it does not outweigh in value, all the rest. That is amber. Other countries may export timber, or eggs, or flax. But no other countries save East Prussia and Latvia export amber, for the world's supply comes from the strip of Baltic coast from the Kurisches Haff as far north as Liepaja.

Some say the amber comes from the Haff itself, which at some remote period was dry land covered with coniferous forest; this in time became submerged and the amber is merely the fossilized gum of those pine trees of long ago, and is found in the layers of "blue earth" of the tertiary period, two or three feet thick; these layers occur not only along the Baltic coast but occasionally inland, as, for instance, at Minsk near Vilna, while amber mines are worked near Koenigsberg. In winter the icebergs churn up the bottom of the Haff and so stir the amber, while in the same way the action and undertow of the heavy seas disturb the amber outside, so that it is washed up on the shore, often amidst great branches of seaweed, by the south-westers in the spring.

These are cold facts. But there is an old Lithuanian legend which ascribes a mythical origin to the chunks of amber that are washed up on the Baltic shores. The story goes that there was once a Queen of the Baltic, Juraté, who lived under the sea in a palace of amber. She was destined to be the consort of Patrimpas, the god of water, but she fell in love with a fisherman named Kastytis who had a hut on the banks of the Nemunas, near Klaipeda. Every night for a whole year she visited her lover on the river bank, but at last Perkunas heard of her passion, and, furious that a goddess should allow herself to be profaned by mortal, he sent a shaft of lightning from the skies, killing the lovely queen and shattering her palace of amber to ten thousand fragments.

It is in the spring that the Baltic fishermen goes amber-hunting, clad in oilskin coat and sou'-wester and great leather waders that cover the breast and fasten over the shoulders, carrying a contrivance like a huge shrimping net and with a bag slung round his neck for the amber he may

find. One morning after I had had a bathe in the Baltic Sea with Braks a fine old mariner, who in the summer season runs the bathing huts on the shore just outside the town, put on the whole array for me and showed me how it was done.

In the spring the fishermen devote their time entirely to dredging for amber, and even though their methods are primitive they may make £25 each during the season. All the amber found has to be sold to the Government at a price which is approximately £4 a kilogram, but since the price the traders have to pay for it is far in excess of this, a good deal of smuggling goes on.

Lithuanian amber has been famous from times of remote antiquity. Homer refers to this strip of Baltic Coast as Amber Land; the electron mentioned by Homer and Hesiod as an ornament on warrior's shields was probably amber; Pytheas, the celebrated traveller, who lived in the time of Alexander the Great, mentions that the inhabitants of this region used amber instead of firewood and also sold it to the neighbouring Teutonic tribes, while the ancient Greeks believed that it came from the tears of those birds, the sisters of Meleager, who never ceased weeping for their brother's death—a belief which inspired Thomas Moore's lines:

> "Around thee shall glisten the loveliest amber
> That ever the sorrowing sea-bird hath wept."

The merchants of Phœnicia carried on a barter trade with the Baltic for amber three thousand years ago and amber ornaments have been found in Mycenæan tombs. This was the clear amber, while the Romans preferred the cloudy yellow variety. Tacitus, referring to the Aestii (who may be identified with the southern Estonian tribes), says that "they ransack the sea and are the only people in the world to gather, in the shallows and on the actual shore, amber, which in their own dialect is *glesum* (glass)."*

An amber necklace was discovered in the tomb of Tutankamen and it is interesting to note that the ancient Egyptian word for amber—*sakai*—is identical with the

* *Germania*, ch. xlv.

Lithuanian word meaning resin or gum and the Latvian word meaning amber ; the word still found in place-names on the Baltic—Sakaslina—valley of amber—north of Liepaja, and Sakasosta—amber port—north of Koenigsberg.

Since the days when the caravans from the East penetrated to the shores of the Baltic and carried with them precious cargoes of amber, the industry has decreased in value, but if it were worked on a more scientific scale it might have immense possibilities.

I was told that some years ago a Jew had come to the Haff, seen the chances of making money by improving on the primitive methods of the fishermen and obtained for a song a concession from the Government to work amber in the Haff. He began by hand-dredgers and followed with steam, and before long had made a fortune. The Government saw that he was making too much, cancelled his concession and tried to work the amber as a State industry, but without success ; nor were the French more fortunate. Whether the present Government would grant a fresh concession seems doubtful, for there is a danger of disturbing the fishing industry, but a company that could win the confidence of the fishermen and buy from them (as the Government does now) as well as working with dredgers, would do well.

At present the collecting is entirely in the hands of the fishermen, and the amber found is worked locally at Klaipeda and Palanga, mainly by Jews. With my friend Braks I paid a visit to the chief factory at Klaipeda. First we were shown sacks of amber in its rough natural state, when it ranges from the size of a small pebble to that of a brick, and is then passed to the workshop—a long, rather dilapidated room, where men and women, boys and girls, were working it at different stages.

It was fascinating to watch a necklace in the making. Each piece, as large as a walnut, is first chipped roughly into shape with a knife against a block of wood ; the roughness is shorn from it and it looks like a chunk of dark toffee. Then a hole is bored by means of a gimlet, revolved by

rubbing with the string of a bow until it eats its way through the bead. The bead is then impaled upon a tiny lathe driven by a motor; as it speeds round the worker, with great skill, peels off shavings of amber with his sharp knife until he has made the bead symmetrical. It is then polished, or if it is to be given facets it is held by means of a long pin on to a revolving disc, like a gramophone record, the worker turning the pin with one hand and holding the bead in position with the other—just long enough for a tiny part of the rounded surface to be worn flat in turn.

That is the last stage and the bead is then placed on a table with others, which are sorted into heaps, according to size and colour, and strung, either in necklaces of clearest dark amber or of the yellow cloudy variety: according to the Jews there is no difference in value, and preference for clear or cloudy amber is a matter of taste and fashion. The products of the factory are sold by weight, and compared with London prices are marvellously cheap, for all the amber worked at Klaipeda is pure, though at Koenigsberg there is a factory for melting small pieces down and compressing them. The Jew lighted a chunk with a match to show us how easily it would burn.

Having given us a general idea of the manufacture the merchant produced a bag of what Braks called "des choses très, très interessantes." These were pieces in which, even in their rough state, could be seen dimly imprisoned ants and flies. Braks selected one for me. It was taken out to a man who was working the larger pieces—skilled work this, requiring several years' training, though the boring and simpler stages can be learnt by girls in six months or so. The young Jew took it and, while he puffed at a cigarette, shaped it swiftly on his turning wheel of granite, by which the rough places were smoothed off; then he set it against a revolving pad and in a few moments held it up to the light for me to see. It was flawless, deep gold as if it were congealed light dinner ale, and in the centre were two tiny flies, perfectly preserved even to their wings. They reminded me of Disraeli's caustic remark about a certain Government when,

thinking of Pope,* he said, "Like the flies in amber, one wonders how the devil they got there."

Braks took it from the workman, and as he presented it to me pointed to the two tiny relics of the past and said:

"They are symbols of you and me. Let our friendship be as imperishable as they!"

§ 4

I was anxious to take a trip down the Haff, home of amber and sand dunes, and one afternoon the Director of the Port, Captain L. Stulpinas, arranged a picnic-party on his private boat, a good-sized paddle-steamer which had been conveniently taken over from the French after the Revolution—the French themselves having had her from the Germans.

I was bidden at two o'clock, and arrived on board at two o'clock. The Director drifted along half an hour later and by three we got away—a party of about twenty young people. The men wore glorious combinations of bicycling and tennis kit, and the girls white muslin frocks. Amongst the party was Miss Jankus, the daughter of the veteran worker for Lithuanian liberty, who, with her father had been carried off by the Russians to Siberia on the outbreak of the war, with a number of other citizens of Klaipeda and had remained exiled for four years. Unlike many of their fellow-countrymen, they had lived to return. To my great delight Miss Jankus was wearing her national costume, as she did, she told me, on every holiday, as a matter of principle, to encourage interest in the national dress. I wanted to tell her that she must undoubtedly do that, for I have seldom seen a more charming picture than she made, and it was wonder to me that her friends had not followed her good example.

Being of pure Lithuanian type—fair hair, blue eyes, fresh complexion and full figure and fine and even teeth—

* "Pretty! in amber, to observe the forms
Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs or worms;
The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,
But wonder how the devil they got there."
POPE, Ep. to Arbuthnot, 169–72.

the national costume became her perfectly. The pleated skirt was in coloured stripes, blue and red predominating. Over a white shirt, whose long sleeves had insertion at the cuffs, she wore an armless bodice of black velvet, laced with red, and a long narrow girdle of coloured wool. Over the skirt was an embroidered apron in blue and red wool on white. Her flaxen hair, worn in plaited coils on either side of her head, was bound with a narrow ribbon of yellow and blue—to match her hair and eyes. White stockings, black shoes and an amber necklace completed the costume and made her a very lovely picture. These costumes are still made in the country and it is to be hoped that the example of Lithuanian ladies will lead to a revival.

We were a merry party going down the Haff, at the northern end of which, opposite Klaipeda, is the residential quarter of the town, served by frequent ferry-boats. Here, too, is the Casino. It was built originally by the Germans as an hotel, and having been started as a Casino by the French the new Government has carried it on. The 1922 profits—£1000—are being devoted to building an orphanage, but the more severe element is strongly in favour of it being closed. It is patronized mainly by Jews and Germans.

We assembled on the bridge, and the Director provided Lithuanian stout for the company, until we came to Schwartzort, a little village built amidst the pine woods, where once there was nothing but sand dunes. To the south these dunes rise like mountains and shift from year to year to such an extent that they have been known to cover whole villages, but the Germans gave their attention to afforestation of this barren region—known as the Sahara of Lithuania—and by first planting grass to form humus, and then pine trees, have achieved remarkable results. The Lithuanian Government is carrying on this useful work.

Schwartzort, once a tiny fishing village, is now the popular holiday resort for the Germans and Jews of Klaipeda. The Lithuanians themselves prefer Palanga, a few miles north of Klaipeda, which is in the old Russian territory, and as one motors to it along what is for the best part of the way a good metalled road, one realizes one has

arrived in what was once Russia by coming on to a bumpy earth road as soon as the empty Customs houses, that marked the former frontier, are passed.

At Palanga the national custom of bathing nude is followed, though mixed bathing is allowed only in decorous bathing dresses. At Schwartzort, on the other hand, costumes are worn without exception. Lithuanians do not care to spend their holidays at Schwartzort, because, they say, it is full of Jews and Germans. On the other hand, I walked back one night to Rytas with a Memel German (who kindly helped me find my way) and he informed me that he detested Palanga because it was Russian, and complained bitterly that he could not get used to the Lithuanian names that were being introduced in Klaipeda. It was interesting to hear the other point of view.

We landed at Schwartzort and walked through the streets of little wooden chalets, through the pine woods and over the dunes to the sea on the other side. There we rested and then returned, the whole party singing Lithuanian songs all the way home.

As may well be imagined, the Haff is the scene of many a native legend. One of these was told me by Dr. Zilius, a prominent Lithuanian who has spent some time in America and is a high authority on Lithuanian folklore and custom.

In olden days, according to this story, the Haff was ruled by a king who, having no consort, fell in love with Mariu Panu, the goddess of the Haff. Now the king had as one of his liegemen a fisherman, whose father had left him a horse with supernatural powers.

The king called the fisherman to him and told him of his love, bidding him catch the goddess of the Haff, on pain of death if he failed. At first the fisherman was in despair. Then he turned to his horse for counsel

"This is what you must do," said the horse. "Build a beautiful house on one of the islands in the Haff and set in it many looking-glasses. When the queen sees the sun shining upon them she will be curious to find out what they are and will surely come to land."

The fisherman built the palace, and everything happened as the horse had foretold, and as the queen came out of the water she was made prisoner. But when she was brought before the king she cried :

" Alas ! how can I marry you ? For as I was being carried off my ring dropped off my finger and fell back into the sea. It is most precious to me. Tell your fisherman that he must find it for me, or I will never marry you of my own free will."

To the fisherman his new task seemed hopeless. But once more he sought the counsel of his horse.

" There is but one way," the horse told him. " You must remove the skin from my forelegs and stand me in the water. Then the crabs will come to nibble my legs and thus we shall catch their king. To regain his liberty he will help us."

In good time the King of the Crabs was caught. He was promised his freedom if he would produce the ring and so he set all the fish and all the crabs in the Haff searching for the queen's ring, and at last the smallest of the fish* brought the ring to the fisherman impaled upon its horns.

But as soon as she had been given back her ring the queen began to raise fresh objections, saying that she could not live without her cow.

Once more the fisherman consulted his horse, who asked to be taken to the shores of the Haff. There he turned into a bull and began to bellow. It was not long before the queen's cow emerged from the sea ; the bull retreated before her until, with her twelve calves behind her, she came into the palace grounds and was caught.

Then the queen said to the king : " If you will but bathe in the milk of my cow you will be as beautiful as I am."

The king, suspecting nothing, did as he was told, but the milk of the cow was no ordinary milk, and as soon as he began to pour it over him his body burst out into flames and he was burnt to death.

Then said the queen to the fisherman, " Take me back

* Diggle.

to the sea that is my home. You have been a slave and I a captive. Now at last we shall both be free, for our oppressor is no more."

§ 5

By the time we got back to the ship it was nearly eight. Now I had lunched at one off a plate of cold raspberry soup, a bone of hen and a raspberry water-ice, and was ravenous. But no one else seemed to worry about time or food, and I stove off the pangs of hunger with cognac in the Director's cabin on the way home.

Up on deck the others were still singing, but the Director was in an expansive mood and talked to me of the past glories of Lithuania. He was a fine old sailor and had been a captain in the Russian Navy and imprisoned by the Bolsheviks. I had never realized the possibilities of the English language until I heard him speak it. "Are you a gentleman or are you a fakes?" he told me the betrayed Keistutis had exclaimed to those who took him prisoner with his son Vytautas. He seemed to know every corner of the Haff and hinted at vast hidden amber deposits known only to some of the old fishermen who would not part with their knowledge to the Germans or the French.

When the paddle-steamer came alongside, the rest of the party were still singing their folk-songs. Singing we walked arm-in-arm along the quay and then at the port gates Braks called a halt.

The next moment I saw that I was in for a speech. We gathered round him in the moonlight and he spoke volubly in Lithuanian, never hesitating for a word. The Director translated for my benefit in his glorious English, telling me how proud they were to welcome a representative of England, whom they regarded as their liberator and protector.

Set down in cold print it may sound just eye-wash, but I could not help being touched—it was all so spontaneous and so utterly un-English. And when, after my brief reply—in which I told them how pleasant it was to find a country that had got something out of the war—Miss Jankus presented me (to my confusion) with a bouquet

of wild flowers, miraculously culled during Braks' speech, it made a delightful end to a pleasant day.

Certainly no Englishman in Lithuania will ever want for friends.

§ 6

Like Lithuania Major, the Klaipeda Territory is essentially an agricultural country and in both parts of the Republic it is coming to be realized that dairy farming is more profitable than growing corn, and, owing to the heavy rainfall in July and August, the country is better adapted to stock-raising and root crops than grain. The growth of live-stock since 1920 has been remarkable, the number of horses, cattle, sheep and pigs having risen from three million head to over five. The Government has promised not to expropriate landowners in the Territory, but, with the example of " land for the landless " across the border, the workers are already clamouring for an extension of the new Agricultural Reform, and it is difficult to see how it can be postponed for long.

At present, however, the larger estates remain, and many of them are still owned by Germans who bought them before the war. In fact the contrast between German and Lithuanian types of houses is very marked, and although the Lithuanian log farm-houses do exist, the German influence can often be seen even then, either in a tiled roof or a stone foundation, while many of the small towns, such as Siluté, a few miles outside Klaipeda, have a completely German appearance and might have been dumped down from Germany. Nor is this influence to be seen only in the buildings : it extends to methods of agriculture as well, and it is only fair to say that it is an influence for good.

Thanks to Braks and my other friends at Rytas I was able to take several long trips into the country during my stay at Klaipeda and to spend many a pleasant hour in the farm-houses. These trips were always delightfully informal. Everything seemed to be done on the spur of the moment and one never knew how large the party was going to be, but when one did start everything was ready. I remember

particularly one day when we set off, about a dozen of us, in two motor-cars and visited farm after farm, on each of which a hearty meal was produced at short notice, and having an odd half-hour we put in at a nail factory.

It was interesting to go from a small farm of no more than seventy acres, worked entirely by a widower and his seven children (though he lived on a scale quite equal to that of our own farmers) towards the flat delta of the Nemunas, near Tilsit, where the land, which is flooded every spring, can be used only for pasturage. Our host here was a wealthy man with a large house, furnished, naturally enough, in the German middle-class fashion, and his wealth was derived from his pigs—all pure bred English Large Whites—and the cattle, from whose milk was made the great round Tilsiter (now called Memelander) cheeses which are exported chiefly to Hamburg. And here I found an interesting thing—the German influence on the individual. For although both our host and hostess were of Lithuanian origin they were only then learning to speak Lithuanian, and so the company had to speak German, though the mother of our hostess herself spoke her native tongue.

It was during this trip that I learnt two Lithuanian customs—the pleasant one of shaking one's hostess warmly by the hand immediately on rising from a meal, and thanking her for her hospitality, and the sensible one of each member of the party giving a small tip to the servant before departure.

The Lithuanians are a race of farmers, but I found a marked difference between those of the Klaipeda Territory and of Lithuania Major. It seemed to me that the difference was the difference between a Protestant and a Catholic people. Formerly the whole of the Territory was Roman Catholic, having been officially converted in 1386. But when the influence of the Lutheran Reformation spread from the west the monks accepted the change and the people with them. This influence also made itself felt in Lithuania Major, but whereas there the Poles sent missions to win the people back to Rome the Klaipeda Territory has remained Protestant to this day.

In the Klaipeda Territory I found the same kindliness and hospitality as in Lithuania, but the people have not the same gaiety. They are perhaps more puritanical; outwardly they do not show the same happy spirit—that characteristic which is so striking in Lithuania; singing and dancing do not play so large a part in their lives. Then they are certainly more conservative. They have not at present that passion for education that possesses the peasant farmer of Lithuania Major; they stick to the land and—perhaps rightly—have an intense mistrust of town life for their sons. The result is that many of them can scarcely read or write, but on the other hand the country is certainly better farmed as a result of German influence—more machinery is used and more attention is paid to putting back into the soil, by means of artificial manures, what is taken from it.

It is dangerous to generalize, but these salient points were very noticeable. There are signs, however, that even the least progressive are awakening and it is probable that in a few years the desire for education among the peasants of the Territory will be as strong as it is to-day among those of Lithuania Major. Also even among these Protestants I could not help seeing that the pagan was not completely stifled, for one day, when a large party of us were dining in a farm-house, the Director of the State Bank knocked over a glass of port and, having apologized to our hostess, looked round the table and said piously:

"A libation to Perkunas!"

§ 7

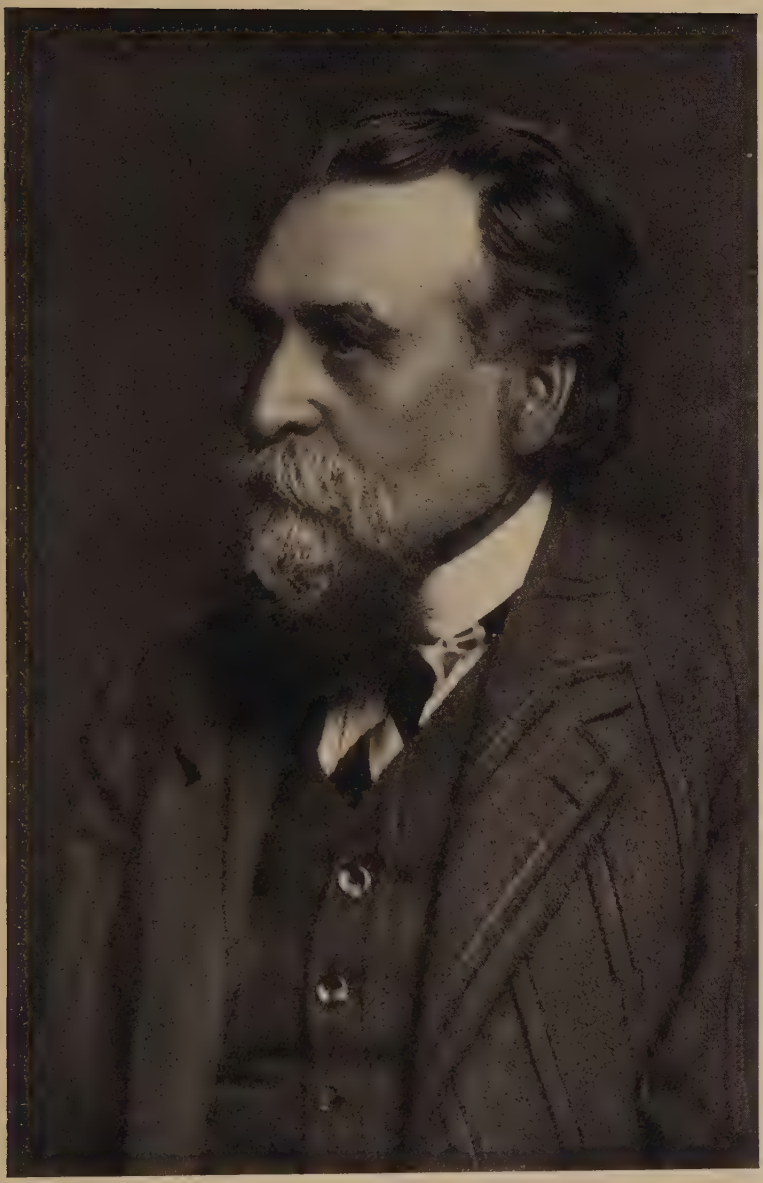
In spite of the difference between the people of the two sections of the country, their hearts are not divided. They cherish the same national aspirations. If I had needed any proof beyond what I obtained by talking to the Lithuanians I met in Klaipeda, it was given me one afternoon when I met Professor Shimkus on the steps of Rytas. The Professor is the Director of the Klaipeda College of Music, which since its recent foundation has been doing excellent work training young men of all nationalities—for here Lithuanians and Germans are content to sink their differences, proving once

again that music has no frontiers. The Professor, whose well-nourished body seemed to exude vitality not only when he played his own compositions but when he talked, carried me off to a distinguished gathering at the College, to which Dr. Basanavicius was paying a visit during a brief stay he was making at Palanga.

It was indeed a privilege to meet and speak to this Grand Old Man of Lithuania who had devoted his long life—he is now seventy-two—to the regeneration of his country. It seems that while he was still a medical student at the Moscow University (whence he had graduated from the High School of Mariampolé) he was animated with this passionate desire for the awakening of Lithuania, and although he practised his profession in Bulgaria for twenty-five years, he worked incessantly for Lithuanian ends—indeed the example of how Bulgaria had revived when once freed from the Turkish yoke inspired him to greater efforts on behalf of his own subjugated land. Once Lithuania could be awakened, once she could be freed, the dawn would come. When his paper *Ausra* (Dawn) first appeared in 1883 the sun of liberty had not yet arisen : nor did it rise for nearly thirty years. But during those thirty years he, and the little band with him, worked unceasingly. Seldom can history have seen such patient devotion to a nation's cause. As my old friend the Director of the Port told me very earnestly, " Basanavicius said ' We cannot let Lithuania be rottened out.' "*

The Doctor has a noble head and his eyes are those of a seer. All his life he has dreamed great dreams : and to few men can it be given to see their dreams come true as he has done. He has one dream still unfulfilled—and that is Vilna for Lithuania. He himself lives at Vilna—as a matter of principle—and the Poles dare not molest him, for his person is regarded as almost sacred by all good Lithuanians. Those present at Professor Shimkus's party treated him with a deference that amounted almost to veneration, and each one kissed him affectionately on both cheeks when he took his leave.

* This expressive word probably owes its derivation to the German *ausrotten*=to exterminate.



DR. JONAS BASANAVICIUS
The Grand Old Man of Lithuania

He spoke little. His thoughts seemed far away, in the future, perhaps; more likely in the past. But he spoke to me of Lithuania's gratitude to England, and told me something of how the Poles oppressed Lithuanians in the Vilna area by not even allowing them to print books in their own language—a ban which, it is only fair to say, has now been removed, though the Lithuanians complain that their few newspapers in the Vilna district are being continually suppressed on various pretexts.

A few days later the Doctor very graciously sent me the following message to the English-speaking peoples:

"Since ancient times small nations have grouped themselves round the great Powers as though in quest of an assurance that they might exist undisturbed. Thus, for example, around the Romans were clustered numerous small nationalities, who bore the honoured name of *socii populi Romani*. A similar relationship now exists between the Lithuanian nation and the British Empire, whose powerful sheltering arm the Lithuanian Republic has felt since the very day of its rebirth.

"The Lithuanian nation, which of all the European nations retains to this day the purest and oldest example of the surviving Aryan language and which has been able to preserve the imprints of its ancient culture, during the Middle Ages played an important part in the history of Eastern Europe, losing this powerful rôle only by its union with the Poles. Weakened by the events of the past few centuries, it barely survived, and became a mere shadow of the once powerful nation. Freed from the Russian yoke, it still remains a weakened nation in need of support from other powerful countries.

"Among the strong Powers the eyes of Lithuania instinctively turn toward America, with whom it has the tie of almost a million emigrants to bind it, and, together in the first place, towards the powerful British Empire from whom the Lithuanian nation since its rebirth has experienced profuse sympathy and to whom it looks forward for greater support in the future; such support will enable the young Lithuanian Republic to uphold its own culture—which draws

its beginning from the distant past—and equally will help it to maintain the regained independence of the State.

"I should be very happy if the newly established good will between the British and the Lithuanian nations would constantly increase in strength and heartiness, so that the Lithuanian nation in firm confidence could attain, according to that ancient example, the honoured name of *socii populi Britannici.*"

§ 8

My talk with the venerable doctor brought back to me the complexity of the quarrel between Lithuania and Poland, and a few days later, as I was borne towards the Latvian frontier in a first-class railway carriage lit with nothing better than a single candle, I wondered what the end of it would be.

Lithuania has gained much since the war. If she is rightly led she has before her a prosperous future, the future of a country whose people are wedded to the land, frugal, contented and clean-living. The Lithuanians have their opportunity—and it is a great one. They can take their place among the smaller nations of Europe, and the produce of their land, gradually increasing as time goes on, assures them a reasonable living.

But at present they are advancing along the road to prosperity with the brake on, for Lithuania cannot make the most of the chances before her until she settles her differences with her neighbour. From the present quarrel Lithuania has far more to lose than Poland, however much she may believe she has still to gain. Both sides, unquestionably, believe passionately in the justice of their claim to Vilna: and so far the claims of Poland have been upheld. It is a quarrel which is unlikely to be settled without some form of intervention. Poland has Vilna: Lithuania claims it. Neither side is likely to give in. It is surely here that the League of Nations might perform the duty for which it was created: if both sides laid their cases before that tribunal and accepted the decision it would not only strengthen the peace of Eastern Europe but, whichever

way the decision went, Lithuania would then be able to turn her thoughts—at present disturbed and unconcentrated—to her future.

To ardent patriots this may seem a tame course, but short of a disastrous war it is the only one. I cannot believe that the Lithuanians will not see the wisdom of adopting it. And as I looked through the rain-pocked window of my carriage, I seemed to see the Spirit of the Lithuanian Knight riding in the triumph of a new dawn across the fertile fields of a land to whom peace had come at last.

## CHAPTER VI

## RIGA: THE WINDOW OF THE BALTIC

The Latvian landscape—Arrival in Riga—A spotless city—German influence—The most artistic gasworks in Europe—Architectural glories of the old town—The House of the Blackheads—Wagner claimed as a Lettish composer—Riga cabarets—The Beautiful Lady who loved little lobsters—The Casino—Lettish income-tax inspectors display a sense of humour—The Strand—Riga's hotels—An inexpensive country—The British Club—The tyranny of petty officials—Why foreigners grumble.

### § 1

TRAVELLING by the night train from Klaipeda to Riga one reaches Priekulé, the Latvian Customs station, at 11 p.m. It is an unpleasant hour to turn out and, I suppose, an equally unpleasant hour to be on duty. Anyhow, I found the Latvian Customs officials rather more difficult than the Lithuanian ones had been at Eydtkuhnen.

The Latvian Legation in London had very courteously provided me with a *laissez passer*. On the production of this document the attitude of the officials changed from contempt to cold civility; they refrained from opening my bags and allowed me to go out first from the small examination-room into which I and my fellow-travellers had been penned. As I was pacing up and down the station waiting for the Riga train, however, another little officer came rushing up and peremptorily demanded my passport, and I had to begin again. The Baltic Customs system has been inherited from Russia, whose regulations were notoriously harsh, and I could not help feeling that the Governments of the three Republics would do well to send a deputation of their Customs officers to study the methods of the United States, where, at a great port like San Francisco, the examiners, though extremely thorough, are always courteous and good-humoured.

RIGA

On the Riga train I had a comfortable sleeper for the modest sum of ten shillings, and as the dawn was breaking I drew the blind and peered out at the Latvian landscape. A glance was enough to show me that I was amongst timber houses again, but they seemed more elaborate than those of Lithuania and were often two-storied. Otherwise the countryside seemed much the same as it had been farther south—flat fertile fields broken by patches of fir and pine forest, with here and there a belt of birch trees, their silver trunks gleaming whitely in the morning sunshine. Occasionally I saw traces of the war, and overgrown trenches and sagging strands of rusty barbed wire formed a queer contrast to the tidy haystacks, built up inside four posts with a square roof of wooden shingles, that stood isolated in the fields.

One is accustomed to think of the Baltic States as little countries, yet Latvia, whose area is twenty-five thousand square miles, could contain both Holland and Belgium, and has a population of two and a half millions, eight out of every ten of whom are Letts. In shape Latvia is not unlike a Lancashire clog, the heel resting on Poland and the toe forming the Gulf of Riga. The State consists of the former Russian Province of Kurzeme (Courland), the southern half of the province of Vidzeme (Livonia) and the district of Latgalia, formerly part of the province of Vitebsk. In the north Latvia is bounded by Estonia, on the south by Lithuania and Poland, on the east by Soviet Russia and on the west by the Baltic Sea, with a coastline of nearly three hundred and fifty miles, the three chief ports being Riga (the capital, with a population of three hundred thousand), Ventspils (Windau) and Liepaja (Libau), all of which are important outlets for Russia and have a central and advantageous position for trading with the States of Northern Europe.

Like Lithuania, Latvia is a flat country, and over a third of it is still covered with forest; about one-tenth of the area is made up of lakes and swamps and the remainder, rather more than half, consists of equal proportions of arable land and grass. Like Lithuania, too, Latvia is well watered. The chief river system is that of the Daugava (Dvina) which,

rising in White Russia, flows through Latvia from south-west to north-east and is the natural outlet for timber coming from the Russian forests.

Riga straddles the river twenty miles from its mouth, and Daugavpils (Dvinsk), formerly a great Russian fortress and still a town of considerable strategical importance, stands on its banks close to the Polish frontier. At its mouth the Daugava is joined by the Lillupe (Courland Aa) on which, at the main junction of its many tributaries, stands Jelgava (Mitau), the centre of the finest agricultural land in Latvia. Northern Latvia is watered by the Gauja, which formerly also had the name of Aa.

The new place- and river- names in the Baltic States are apt to be a little trying to the memory, for since the war Riga is about the only one that remains unchanged—and it may be noted that the normal pronunciation of that name does not rhyme with tiger, as it is made to in the limerick. And surely every schoolboy will regret the blotting from the map of Aa, a noble name of whose precedence there has never been any question, for it has headed every gazetteer for centuries. Indeed, the only thing that restrains one from writing a lament on The Passing of Aa is the fact that the good old name is still carried on by a department in Holland, a river in Prussia and another in Switzerland.

§ 2

Six o'clock on a sunny summer morning is a good time for a traveller to arrive in Riga. After the dirt of Kaunas it is a refreshing capital. Its wide paved streets are fringed with shady lime trees, which grow so thickly that when it is raining you may walk beneath them without need of umbrella ; and the pavements look almost as though they had been scrubbed with soap and water, so clean are they. Nor is this far from the truth, for the early riser may see a company of women busy with their hoses in the streets of Riga every morning in the week.

Riga is a noble city, a city of many parks, of wide streets, of dignified buildings. Formerly it was the first port of Russia, but beyond the Orthodox Cathedral, which is pure

Byzantine, there is little Russian influence to be seen in the architecture of the town. Before the war the trade was almost wholly in German hands, and so it is German influence, not Russian, which pervades the modern part of the town, the streets of which are laid out in rectangular blocks with the precision of an American city.

The park in the centre of the town, though not large, is a blaze of flowers in spring and summer, and is divided by a canal which has been converted from the old moat. Above this canal rises what the passer-by imagines to be a castle until he discovers that those mellow battlemented walls used to house the Riga gasworks—surely the most artistic gasworks in the world and an object lesson to us in England that utility need not necessarily be a synonym for hideousness. The building is now abandoned, for the electric light station has superseded it and it has been found too impregnated with gas to be safe to use for other purposes.

The chief fun of visiting a town for the first time is getting lost in it. Until you have been lost you cannot say you know your way about. A city like New York is fool proof: so is much of Riga. But between the canal and the river lies the old town, where crooked byways take the place of the straight wide streets. For Riga dates back to the thirteenth century, having been founded in 1201 by Albert, a canon of Bremen Cathedral, who afterwards became third Bishop of Livonia. It was Bishop Albert who built the Dom Cathedral, the most ancient of Riga's many places of worship. It possesses one of the largest organs in Europe; beneath its glorious stained-glass windows are the tombs of forgotten barons; carved warriors in mediæval armour guard the entrance to the pews; while along its peaceful cloisters, in the centre of which is pent a tiny garden, lie mighty cannon that were captured by the Russians from the Swedes.

The Swedes, too, have left their mark upon the town, for after Gustavus Adolphus took it in 1621, they remained in possession for nearly a century and Riga ranked second only to Stockholm among the kingdom's ports. It was the Swedes who rebuilt the Castle, founded by a Grand Master

of the Teutonic Order in 1330, in which the President of the Latvian Republic lives to-day. They too built the round Powder Tower which was once part of the old city wall and is now the War Museum, and proves a convenient landmark (since several streets converge upon it) to travellers who, like myself, are not cursed with that dull possession, a bump of locality.

Few towns in Europe can have so interesting a store of architectural treasures set in so small a compass as Riga. There is the Church of St. Joannes where, high up in a wall above the street, is embedded the skull of a monk who received short shrift for plotting (unsuccessfully) to murder his Bishop as he ascended the pulpit ; across the narrow street rises the highest wooden tower in Europe, that of St. Peter's, above whose portal stands its patron saint armed with gigantic keys, with the splashes made by shrapnel bullets about his head. Nearby is the Livlandische Ritterhaus, in olden days the assembly-house of the Livonian nobility, in whose hands was the government of the town.

Opposite the Town Hall, which dates from 1759, is perhaps the most interesting building in the whole of the Baltic States, the Schwartzhaupter Haus, whose magnificent façade, in the Dutch Renaissance style, is now partially spoilt by a barbarous modern wine shop. Originally this building, which was founded in 1330, was erected by the town as a guild assembly-hall, but since 1793 it has been the property of the Blackheads, a bachelor society formed early in the fifteenth century. It is said that the idea of this club sprang " from the wish for intercourse with kindred spirits aiming at the satisfaction of social and spiritual wants "—the best reason for the foundation of any club—and it maintained its character until the war.

The Blackheads took their name from the negro's head which was the emblem of the patron saint of the society, St. Mauritius, said to have been a Roman warrior martyred in the year 287 and venerated in the Middle Ages as the patron saint of students. In the main hall, which is now used for public concerts, are some magnificent pictures of

ST. PETER'S, RIGA

THE POWDER TOWER

Swedish and Russian sovereigns, the most striking of all being one of Catherine the Great astride a white charger. Beneath this hall is a series of smaller rooms, all decorated, even to the chairs, with the negro's head, while negroes support the coat of arms of former members of the Society. The dining-room alone has many a treasure on its walls—a mail coat of Gustavus Adolphus; a blue satin shoe left behind at a ball by Anna, the wife of Tsar Peter II; turtle-shells that were used as shields, on one of which is painted a copy of a famous portrait of Gustavus; the model of a frigate presented in the fifteenth century to the Hanseatic League, of which Riga was a member.* These and the pictures the Bolsheviks passed by, unaware, it must be supposed, of their value: for they did not omit to loot the fine collection of silver plate, the historic interest of which must have been unique.

All this, and much else besides, will the traveller who potters about the streets of this old city find. The Letts themselves will not show him much of these ancient glories —they are foreign, not Lettish, and at the present time the national outlook has not had time to readjust itself, and so chauvinistic is the modern Lett that he cares not a rap for anything he cannot call Lettish—at least so it seemed to me. It is natural enough, for, like the Lithuanians, the Letts have waited long for their hour; but at times this attitude becomes a little pathetic when it goes to the length of claiming for Latvia what is not hers—as when the Lettish parlourmaid of a friend of mine raved to her mistress about the wonderful Lettish music she had heard at a concert when in reality she had been listening to Wagner.

§ 3

There is no secluded air of remoteness about the old town, for it is the busiest part of the city. In the more spacious modern quarter are the Government Offices, the Legations and the Consulates. Seldom have I seen a British Consul

* The League was a confederacy between certain cities of Northern Germany for mutual prosperity and protection, and was established in 1239. At one time it numbered eighty-five cities, among which were Memel and Reval, but it declined during the Thirty Years' War.

so adequately housed, and the young Republic has been more fortunate than Lithuania in the accommodation it was able to acquire when it came into being, for some of the buildings it occupies, particularly the Foreign Office and the Ministry of Finance, would not disgrace any capital in Europe. In the old town, however, is situated the business quarter—the Bourse, a hideous building in what may be called the terra-cotta style, the banks and the shipping offices, are all to be found in its narrow streets, in which bearded expressmen in bright blue Russian smock tunics make a splash of colour.

All roads from the old town lead to the river, and on the way to the quays (where you may spend a pleasant half-hour watching other people work, for there is always a ship or two loading timber) you pass through the market, long rows of little wooden booths where you may buy anything from bacon to patent medicines, jostled by as amazing a variation of types as you will find anywhere in Northern Europe.

By night one needs an electric torch to get about the streets of the old town with any comfort, though the main streets of the modern city are lighted, and the brilliance of its one electric light sign breaks the gloom—an advertisement for the cigarettes, Russian in origin but now manufactured all over the Baltic States, half cardboard mouthpiece and half tobacco, which go out with irritating regularity and yet have an insidious attraction—perhaps because they are so unsatisfying—that makes one smoke them all day long.

At night the streets of Riga are not haunted by members of the oldest profession in the world: or if they are there they do not ply their trade so blatantly as in London or Berlin. Such cabarets and other night haunts as I visited are respectable to a degree of dullness. Their patrons are mostly foreigners, since the Letts themselves cannot afford to pay their exorbitant prices and, it may be supposed, seek their pleasures elsewhere; there are many delightful little garden restaurants in the town where one can dance and obtain food and drink at a modest price.

The great dish at a Riga cabaret is *raki*, small boiled lobsters served in huge bowls, smoking hot.* To me these *raki* will always bring back memories of a shattered romance. Late one night a friend I had met again in Riga suggested visiting a cabaret where a lady in whom he took an interest was dancing—a Russian girl, of good family it was said, who, like many another, had fallen on evil days and was forced to earn her living as best she could.

So we went and, seated at a table in a little alcove of the dimly lighted room, watched her dance Russian dances, dressed in an old Russian costume of many colours which became her admirably. For she was beautiful, really beautiful—there was no doubt about that—with glorious grey eyes, hair like cloudy Lithuanian amber and the most exquisite features I have ever seen. If it is permissible to misquote Mr. de la Mare,

> " I think she was the most Beautiful Lady
> That ever came from the East Country,"

and she looked (and, for all I know, was) as virtuous as she was beautiful, like the princesses of the fairy-tales of whom she seemed a reincarnation.

As she came down the stairs after she had changed, and sat at our table, her calm dignity made the frail painted females around her look even more tawdry than they really were. She was gracious, too, and smiled upon my friend. Yes, she would take a glass of cognac. And she would eat something ? Yes, perhaps some *raki*. The *raki* were good here . . . and with them a glass of stout.

No one but I, perhaps, would have noticed my friend's change of expression. I noticed it because it has always been a theory of mine that anyone suffering from a hopeless passion should offer the object of his affection a glass of stout and watch her drink it. But of *raki* I had then no experience. Had my friend but known what was coming, had he but realized that there is nothing half so fleet in life as love's young dream, he would have said firmly, " Split

* *Raki* is the Russian name for these crustaceans ; the Lettish form is *vezi*.

chicken you may have, and sweet champagne, but *raki* and stout are not for princesses out of fairy-tales." But beauty is ever forgiven much, and he said nothing of the kind. The *raki* were ordered. They came, two great steaming bowls of them ; so did the stout.

And then that Beautiful Lady got to work. She fell to, as the saying goes. One after another, she pulled those little red lobsters out of the bowl, breaking their claws in her long white fingers with incredible skill, gnawing and sucking to get at the white meat within. The band struck up a fox-trot, but she would not dance. She met our attempts at conversation with monosyllables or nods, so intent was she, until from her plate rose a great red mountain of *raki* shells, her refilled glass of stout standing like a black thundercloud beside it.

Beauty can be forgiven much, but not all. I saw my friend peer into the bowl. There were still some *raki* there. Obviously the end was not yet. He could bear no more. He paid the bill—goodness only knows how many thousand roubles those little lobsters didn't cost him—and having made our excuses we rose to go.

The Beautiful Lady was unperturbed—have I not said there were more *raki* in the bowl ? As we passed up the stairs we looked down at her. Her eyes said good-bye to us. She did not speak or even wave. Those lovely lips and those long white fingers were far too busy with another claw.

I led my friend back to the hotel through the deserted streets and tried to console him over a bottle of vodka, until the dawn came creeping about the old castle towers across the square. But I doubt if he will ever feel quite the same again.

§ 4

Cabarets are not the only form of distraction the pleasure-seeker may find in Riga, for, as at Klaipeda, there is a Casino. Like the cabarets, this is supported almost entirely by foreigners ; indeed it is against the paternal law for a Lett to play at the tables unless he has an income of at least £600 a year—and that, in Latvia, is considered passing rich.

It is said that some bold but impecunious spirits, in their desire to play, recklessly declared their incomes at the stipulated amount. They were taken at their word not only by the Casino authorities but (as they were horrified to find later) by the income-tax inspectors, who had apparently put in some good liaison work with the Casino—probably the only occasion in history on which a collector of income-tax has ever displayed a sense of humour.

The Casino is situated at the " Strand," Riga's seaside resort which is reached either by tram or by fifteen miles of what must be one of the worst metalled roads in Europe. As in Lithuania, the Government has not had the time or the money yet to put its roads in order, but one would imagine that the stretch from Riga to the Strand, over which quite a considerable amount of motor traffic passes every day in spring and summer, might at least receive some attention.

The Strand is as unlike the average English " watering-place " as anything could well be. There are no piers, no fronts, no promenades, no Grand Hotels. Mile after mile of little wooden chalets and bungalows stretch alongside the road, often amidst the pine trees, but hidden from the sea by long banks of sand dunes. One of these little suburbs is called Edinburg: it is said that many years ago a Scottish merchant of Riga built the first house there and gave the locality the name of his native city, which has remained to this day. History does not appear to record whether it was an Irishman who called the neighbouring suburb Dubbeln, a name which is now rendered Dubulté.

Most British and American visitors to Riga stay at the Petrograd, which stands in the quiet square opposite the Castle. As hotels go, it is nothing to rave about, and for some obscure reason one cannot procure anything but beer with one's meals; but it has a friendly and obliging porter and is clean and quiet. Moreover, one may obtain a room double the size of those provided at the Rome, the only other hotel in the town worth mentioning, at nearly half the cost. I tried the Rome first, but next day, having

discovered that I could get better accommodation for 5 lats instead of 8 (1 lat is roughly equal to 10d. or a gold franc), I moved without regret.

Four and twopence, or a dollar, a night for a large bedroom on the first floor of a reasonably comfortable hotel in a European capital is moderate enough, and living expenses in Latvia are considerably lower than in Lithuania. Rents are not high, since there is not the same scarcity of accommodation as at Kaunas; one English resident in Riga told me he paid just over £3 a month for two large and well-furnished rooms in a flat.

Comparing prices with an American lady who has kept house for some time in Riga, I found that white bread was 8d. lb., sugar 3d., meat 4d. to 5d., while eggs were 1d. to 3d. each, according to size. Naturally, imported goods are more expensive, for the Customs duties are heavy, so that coffee is 2s. 8d. and Indian or China tea 4s. 8d. lb., while oranges cost over 1s. each. On the other hand, cooking butter is 1s. lb. and best butter ("Alpha") 1s. 6d., milk 3d. a litre, though fruit and vegetables are dearer—raspberries, for instance, are 1s. 6d. lb. and tomatoes 10d.

A drosky will go anywhere in the town for 10d., including tip, and I never found a driver who quarrelled with his fare but once. That was the first drosky driver I hired in Riga who, when asked what the damage was, demanded "funfzig." Imagining that he meant 50 santimu, or ½ lat, I paid very cheerfully and went off rejoicing that I had found a country where one could drive a mile for 5d. A loud growl brought me back again, and I discovered that the funfzig meant 50 roubles, which is the equivalent of 1 lat, for although Latvia has its own coinage (the bright silver lats come from the British Mint) the population, being used to reckoning in roubles, continues to do so, and the paper money is still in rouble notes. This is somewhat confusing to the traveller whose strong point is not arithmetic, but the main thing is that the currency is stabilized. The Government has now brought in the kilogram instead of the Russian pood,* but in the shops the pood persists, or rather

* 40 pood = 36 English pounds.

you are apt to get weight at the pood rate and be charged for a kilogram.

The foreign official and commercial community in Riga have established a tennis club with hard courts in the town, and since Riga has no golf course as yet (there was one before the war but no one has been able to find it since) tennis is the chief form of exercise in the summer. The so-called German-Balts also have a club, and one afternoon I was privileged to watch a tournament between the two. There were some amazing costumes. One sturdy Balt, for instance, who played an excellent game, turned out in a peaked student's cap, tight knickerbockers and stockings ; but he didn't create anything like the sensation my host, one of the secretaries of the United States Legation, told me he had created when he appeared on the Strand one afternoon in a pair of " plus fours." As he put it, " They just lined up to watch me go by."

Soon after our arrival my friend was called away to umpire in a match between a German lady and a Russian with an unpronounceable name, and for his sake I hoped the latter would not win, as I felt that the announcement might involve him in difficulties. The position of a tennis umpire is never a sinecure, but when it comes to settling arguments in a foreign language between two ladies who have but a hazy knowledge of the mysteries of " owe thirty " and " half-fifteen " no one but a trained diplomatist could ever hope to tackle the job successfully. At times the arguments across the net grew very heated, but when the players eventually left the court friends I felt that while America has representatives in Europe who can pour oil so tactfully on troubled international waters we are not likely to be let in for another war.

§ 5

The Tennis Club accepts members of all nationalities, but there is one retreat in Riga—the only one in the Baltic States—whose threshold a foreigner (I use the word in the English sense) may not cross uninvited : the British Club. It is close to the Petrograd and consists of three rooms in what was once the vicarage of the English Church. Members

may lunch there every day—two-thirty is the usual time—and meet to dine together on Wednesdays, when the table is strewn with a noble assortment of *hors d'œuvres* and one begins one's meal with a glass of vodka.

The hospitable Scot who introduced me to the Club insisted that it was British, not English—the British community in Riga is now about three hundred. Once seated at the long dining-table one was transported from the Baltic States to England—with all deference to every hospitable Scot in the world I cannot say Britain. Before reaching Riga I had scarcely spoken to a fellow-countryman, and had been content, for I had come to the Baltic States to form my own impressions, not to reflect those of the exiles who dwelt there. For the point of view of the British exile all over the world, as I have found it, is apt to be a little warped. He is usually too near, too self-interested, to form an impartial judgment, and every Britisher, from private soldier to ambassador, is by instinct a grouser, a destructive critic, especially where a Government or any other kind of authority, whether his own or that of the foreign land in which he happens to live, is concerned. His views are useful as a corrective to undue enthusiasm, however, and so his opinion is better taken digestively as a liqueur than as an *aperitif*.

However, that hospitable Club at Riga maintained the traditions of the British, and perhaps the most British thing in it was the young man from Lancashire who said that he longed to see the chimney-stacks of Wigan again every morning when he looked out of his bedroom window. For there is nothing more essentially British, first than that impulse which prompts us to scatter about the world, and having scattered to spend our time wishing we were back home again. His homesickness was soon banished, however, for it was someone's birthday (it is nearly always someone's birthday in the British Club overseas) and a sea captain had produced a bottle of liqueur brandy which, as a gentleman on my left remarked, was so unlike the local cognac that after you'd had two glasses of it you felt like going out to fight a tiger and giving him the first bite.

Now although the point of view of the Britisher may be that of a grouser, it is nevertheless an important one, and it will be just as well to record a few of the grievances against the Lettish Government which I heard while in Riga and was able to substantiate.

Above all what irks the Britisher is the petty officialdom, to which the inhabitants themselves are so well accustomed that they scarcely notice it. For example, special permission has to be obtained for a foreigner to live in Latvia: that is right enough and would it were so in England. But there seems to be need of discrimination, especially when the desire is ostensibly to attract foreign capital—the Letts have little enough of their own.

I talked to a timber-merchant, a man who knew Russia well before the war and had come to Latvia eager to invest and to start a timber business of his own. Now he rues the day he ever came and, he informed me bitterly, would get out of the country to-morrow were his capital not locked up. He was first told that his capital was not enough (he maintained he was best judge of that) and was given a certificate permitting him to live in Latvia for three months instead of for a year, as he had asked, although his application had been recommended by the British Consul. For three months he had to live in a state of insecurity and then obtained a certificate for a year, for which he had the pleasure of paying 15 lats.

Then the income-tax is no more than 15 per cent, but there are innumerable other taxes and a foreigner is at the mercy of the collector, whose only object in taking the job seems to be for what he can make out of it by graft—the chief ambition of a Lett nowadays (I was told) is to become some kind of Government official so that he can squeeze at will.

A tax of ½ per cent is charged on all business contracts, so that many firms have taken to making contracts by an exchange of letters, though the Government sometimes demands to see the documents and tries to insist on the commission being paid. In addition to this, the export duty on timber is very heavy and the police put everlasting difficulties in the way of the foreign consigner—all in the

hope of getting their palms well greased. Import duties are even exorbitant for luxuries: I heard of one lady who imported from New York six pairs of silk stockings, a pair of shoes and a couple of jumpers, costing about £9, and was charged the equivalent of £25 duty on them: the result was that they went back whence they had come; £75 was charged as import duty on a billiard table, with the same result, while a poor Russian *modiste* who tried to bring in two trunks of old clothes was charged £45 until the American Red Cross took the case up and got them in free.

It is an intolerable business getting articles through the Latvian Customs, or parcels from the post office. It takes even a member of the British Legation twenty-four hours to pass a box of personal effects through the Customs, and I heard of a case of stationery, consigned to the British Consulate from the Foreign Office in London, that took eighteen signatures from eighteen different departments before it could be released. My friend in the American Legation told me he had once had to wait six months before he could get a parcel out of the post office (all foreign parcels must first go through the Customs Department) and when it was delivered he was charged storage on it!

It is impossible to get even an insufficiently stamped letter from the post office without producing one's passport. I was in the Riga post office one day struggling to get such a letter, and while waiting my turn listened to the efforts of a Russian lady who was trying to extract out of the Lettish official a letter addressed to her from her native country. He spent exactly ten minutes arguing the point, and even though her passport was in order he was apparently scandalized that she should dare to receive a letter from Soviet Russia at all.

"Anyhow, in Russia one does not have all this fuss and formality to get a letter," declared the old dame with spirit.

"And see what kind of Russia you have got in consequence!" retorted the official.

Personally I felt that he was quite enough to make one go red straight away.

The Letts have inherited this tedious bureaucratic system from the Russians and have elaborated it; and since it has become part of the Constitution it is difficult or even impossible to change. The working of the Customs Department is apparently always in arrears, and I found that it was a frequent, and not a rare occurrence, for six weeks to elapse before a parcel could be cleared: but the Post Office Regulations entitled the authorities to demand storage on parcels and it is no concern of theirs why the parcel is stored. That is part of the System. Another aspect is that as soon as an official is asked to do something he immediately attempts to find some clause under which he can get out of doing it: that is (for him) much simpler than acting on his own initiative, for then he may happen to be wrong and the official above him will make trouble. In fact, the whole System is based on the theory of set a thief to catch a thief: one man is appointed to do a job, another to check his work, and yet another to check the checker. To invert the old rhyme, it is a case of

> "Lesser fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite 'em,
> And little fleas have greater fleas, and so *ad infinitum*."

The system, which necessitates an inordinate number of petty officials and probably defeats its own ends, doubtless irritates the more liberal and intelligent Ministers, but it is accepted by the average Lett as inevitable. The trouble is that no foreign business man is likely to accept it as inevitable and, as I had plenty of opportunity for observing, it causes needless waste of time and continual irritation which does not tend to promote good feeling between the Letts and the strangers within their gates.

## CHAPTER VII

## FROM SERFDOM TO LIBERTY

Early intercourse with the outside world—The coming of the Teutonic knights—German commerce, German God and German militarism—The Letts reduced to serfs—The Swedish conquest improves their lot—The enlightened policy of Gustavus Adolphus—Russia prevails—The German-Balts all powerful—A suffering people—Their spirit remains unbroken—The rise of the Lettish Press—Russification sets in—Broken promises—Courland laid waste in the war—The formation of the Lettish Army Corps—The seven stars of the Russian front—The Bolshevik menace—The Bermondt adventure—Liberty at last—Reconstruction of a stricken country—Splendid work of the American Red Cross—Saving the children.

### § 1

THE Letts belong to the same branch of the Indo-European family as the Lithuanians, to whose language their own is closely akin though now less archaic in form. They journeyed together from the East, those wanderers of long ago, and the Letts eventually settled along the banks of the Daugava and on the shores of the Gulf of Riga, dispossessing the dark-haired inhabitants of an earlier day. Like the Lithuanians, they remained undisturbed for centuries, though not unknown, for the amber of the Baltic coast attracted the merchants of distant lands, and the discovery in Latvian tumuli of Roman ornaments, Arabic scales and coins of Samarcand proves that this commercial intercourse must have been considerable.

The Letts' relations with the Scandinavian peoples were naturally closer still, and although historical records are fragmentary, it is clear that the tribes inhabiting Courland and Livonia remained unsubdued until the twelfth century, in spite of attacks by the Goths and the Vikings. Then, like the Lithuanians, they had to fight a new foe—the Teutonic knights, whose emblem, a black cross above a red

sword, was so symbolical of their method of conversion by conquest.

The instruments employed by the Germans in the subjection of the Letts were three: commerce, religion, war. The progression of events is interesting. Mention has been made of the merchants of Lübeck who were forced to seek shelter in the mouth of the Daugava in 1150. They began trading with the tribes of Livonia and thirty years later were followed by Dominican missionaries, whose efforts, however, met with but little success. Then came the notorious Albert of Bremen, afterwards Bishop of Livonia, who in 1200 cast anchor with twenty-three ships at the mouth of the Daugava with the avowed object of subduing and converting the pagan tribes. As Professor Jan Ozolin says in his *Latvia in the Making*, it was an invasion of German "Kultur," which consisted of "German Commerce, German God and German Militarism, in the order named, the same combination that provoked the resistance of the world in 1914."

Albert founded Riga in 1201. With him were the knights and the priests. Both spread over the countryside as surely as spilt milk over a floor. The knights attended to the subjugation of the inhabitants, the priests to their conversion. Neither lacked zeal, but the spiritual conquest was less complete than the physical, though even that took fifty years, and an old German chronicler tells us that the pagans never retreated and never refused a battle, however unequal.

Thus it came about that while the Lithuanians in the south were holding the Order at bay with varying success, the Letts were conquered, since no great leader like Gediminas arose in their midst and they did not make a lasting alliance with the Lithuanians. Having been subdued they were reduced to the condition of serfs, and their overlords founded a nobility whose members became known as the Baltic Barons and remained in possession of their ill-gotten territory for nearly seven centuries.

During this period the Letts suffered more than it is reasonable to suppose any subject race could suffer with-

out meeting the fate of the old Prussians and becoming extinct. Even Herder, the great German philosopher of the eighteenth century, was constrained to declare : " The lot of the peoples on the shores of the Baltic constitutes a sad page in the history of the human race. Humanity shudders with horror at the blood which was there shed, in long and savage warfare, until the old Prussians were almost annihilated, until the Kurs and the Livs were reduced to a slavery under the yoke beneath which they languish still. Perhaps the time will come when they will be set free and, as compensation for the atrocities by means of which these peaceful peoples have been robbed of their country and their liberty, they will be established again, for humanity's sake, to enjoy a better freedom than they knew."*

In the light of the present, Herder's closing words seem strangely prophetic, for, as we know, the day of a better freedom came at last.

But it was long in coming, even though at first the knights had all they could do to maintain their supremacy. Lithuania, as we have seen, they failed to subdue, and so they were never able to obtain the overland route they desired from Germany to their Baltic possessions. Then came the union of Poland with Lithuania and after it the defeat of the Order at Tannenberg in 1410. The power of Russia and Poland waxed, and as it waxed the power of the Order waned and was finally dissolved in 1561, when Livonia came under the sway of Poland, and Courland became an independent Duchy under Polish sovereignty, in spite of the attacks of Ivan the Terrible, who coveted the Baltic ports.

These changes did nothing to lighten the lot of the peasants, for the privileges of the Baltic Barons were confirmed, although in 1586 Stephen Bathory, the King of United Poland and Lithuania, sent an envoy to remonstrate with the nobles because they oppressed the people in a

* The text is a translation from Johann Gottfried von Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, which first appeared between 1784 and 1791.

fashion that, as he declared, " no one has ever heard tell of in all the wide world, even in pagan and barbarian lands."

§ 2

It was not, however, until forty years later that a change for the better came, when Gustavus Adolphus, having conquered Livonia after a long-drawn-out struggle between Sweden and Poland, set himself to ameliorate the condition of the peasants. The custom of serfdom had become too firmly established for him to assail it and many of the great estates fell into the hands of Swedish nobles, but it was Gustavus who had the Bible translated into Lettish and besides founding the University of Dorpat* he established many schools and did much to lighten the conditions under which the peasants lived. Even now the Letts refer to his reign as " the good old Swedish days," and how pitiable had been their previous condition may be gathered from the fact that they were grateful to him for reducing from infinity to thirty-six the number of lashes they might receive from their overlords.

This policy of clemency naturally excited the hatred of the Barons, who, fearful that their privileges were to be wrested from them, turned to Russia for assistance. For a while, however, the power of Sweden prevailed, and Charles XI further embittered the nobles by determining to abolish serfdom which, to the ruling caste, was considered as essential as slavery to the Southern States of America two centuries later. Then, in 1700, came the great war of the North. Charles XII was vanquished at Poltava in 1709. The sovereignty of Livonia passed to Russia, though it was not until nearly a century later, on the partition of Poland, that Courland lost its semi-independent state. Riga, the window of the Baltic, was handed over by the Barons, who received in exchange the restitution of the privileges and rights which had been curtailed by the Swedes. So exclusive did they become that they were accustomed to demand thirty-two quarterings from new-comers and formed a kind of noble trade union of one hundred and seventy-two

* See p. 188.

families, whose members alone might be landed proprietors. German judges administered German law in the Courts. For the Letts the period of Swedish rule had been a glimpse of heaven : for the Barons it had been a nightmare. Once the Barons had regained their power the lot of the people became worse than before.

Then arose a curious situation, which remained until the outbreak of the European war. For here was a ruling caste, German by extraction and bound to Germany by ties of language and tradition, nominally the vassals of Russia, Germany's hated enemy. This, however, did not prevent the German-Balts from penetrating to Russian official circles, even to the Imperial Court. They obtained high commands in the Russian Army and high offices in the Government. It was, in fact, shortly after the Russian conquest of the Baltic Provinces that German influence on Russia began. It was an influence which was to continue to spread insidiously, until the autocracy of the Tsars was in reality subordinate to a German oligarchy. It must be remembered, too, that after the death of Peter in 1725 most of the rulers of Russia, including Catherine the Great, were either German, or of German origin.

It was, however, Catherine herself who, having made a tour of the Provinces and seen with her own eyes the terrible conditions in which the peasants lived and how they were looked upon as the property of their masters—little better than the cattle in the field, to be inherited or sold at will—resolved to re-establish the rights of humanity and, as she put it, to forbid beasts to be made of men. It is not always those who have attained high estate from humble origin who are most compassionate to the class from which they are sprung, but unfortunately her good intentions had little result. Once again the power of the Barons was too secure, their influence too strong. Latvia remained as an old historian said, " A heaven for the nobles, a paradise for the priests, a gold-mine for the merchants and a hell for the peasants."

In this condition the Letts endured until 1804, when Tsar Alexander I, on the appeal of Garlieb Merkel, a German-

Balt who championed the peasants' cause, gave Livonia a law which was to abolish serfdom and to guarantee the rights of man and property. But the law was promulgated in Russian. It was necessary to translate it. And true to the old saying *traduttore tradittore*, by a series of additions and suppressions the Barons succeeded in rendering the law ineffectual, so that the peasant did not secure the proprietorship of his rights that Alexander intended to give him.

It seemed as though nothing could save the unhappy people. Even their last hope, Napoleon, failed them, and although thousands were forced to join the Russian levies, it is said that many of them wept bitterly when they heard of the disasters of the man they had awaited as a saviour.*

Then the Barons, scenting the danger of a "revision" of their title deeds, evolved a final plan. The peasant should have the liberty for which he was always clamouring. From this concession the wretched people gained nothing, for it took away with one hand more than it gave with the other. The emancipated serfs became "free" to work for the landlord on his own terms, but the landlord, on the other hand, was also free to clear off his land any he did not want to keep: and if they starved it was no affair of his. Such freedom came to seem more terrible than serfdom itself, especially to the infirm and old.

§ 3

The outstanding fact in this period of Lettish history is the enslavement of the population. That is not to say, of course, that every Baron treated his people with the inhumanity described. Naturally there were more enlightened overlords, but they were the exception, not the rule, and it is with the rule that a brief historical survey must deal. Subjection and Germanization were the avowed objects of the Barons' policy, and it must be admitted that

* *Der Zustand des freien Bauerstandes in Kurland*, von einem Patrioten, Leipzig, 1869.

the country owed its development to them : they founded towns, they built castles and churches, their commercial expeditions flourished and it was through their energy that forest gave way to agriculture and that before the Russian conquest Livonia had come to be looked upon as the granary of Sweden, while Courland had grown up into a prosperous little State with Ventspils (Windau) as its chief port, a navy of forty-four ships and a merchant fleet of sixty, and with the Isle of Tobago in the West Indies as a colony.*

For a time the inhabitants of Courland seem to have fared better than those of Livonia and had some share in the industrial and commercial life. This did not last long, however, and gradually the nobility wrested from them any privileges they retained.

Yet throughout these years of suffering the Letts, like the Lithuanians, never lost that individuality and those national characteristics which seem to have been so firmly planted in this ancient race. They resisted Germanification, preserved their language and found consolation in their national songs, which bear witness to the unhappy times in which they lived. Here is a translation of one of them :

"Castle of oaks, castle of serfs,
May you be shattered ;
May you sink
To the depths of hell.
The young folk weep as they come,
The old folk weep as they go.
The passing river
Is full of the tears of slaves."

The German-Balts might seize their land, press them into slavery, flog and even torture them, but they could not break the indomitable spirit of those hardy folk.

As time went on, gradually there arose an intellectual class which was to reawaken the national consciousness (numbed, though not killed, by lethargy and suffering) and to battle for the peasants' rights. The leader of this movement was Krischjahnis Waldemars, one of the few Lettish

* Tobago was presented by James I of England to his godchild, James Duke of Courland.

students at Dorpat University. There he formed a circle of undergraduates whose object was the instruction and development of the Lettish people. At St. Petersburg he enlisted the sympathy of several Russian statesmen, even of members of the Imperial family, and, having founded the first Lettish paper (which was published at St. Petersburg to escape the censorship of the German-Balts) he defended the cause of Latvia in the Russian and the Lettish Press.

This was the beginning. Thanks to the liberal ideals of Alexander II, agrarian laws followed, serfdom was at last ended, and a certain degree of self-government was given to the rural communes. These reforms had a great effect on the towns, which, previous to 1860, had been almost entirely German in character and population, since the peasants were chained to the soil by the feudal laws, and citizenship could be held by Germans alone. After the Agrarian Reform, however, the number of Letts who migrated to the towns increased year by year. For instance, in 1863 only 17 per cent of the town-dwellers were Lettish, but by 1897 the number had been increased to 40 per cent, while in the year before the war Letts formed half the population of Latvian towns. Then education was made possible even for the poorest, so that by 1870 it was unusual to find young people who could not read or write. Gradually Letts obtained more control of the country's growing industry and commerce. A Lettish theatre was built in Riga; the Lettish Press grew and flourished and Lettish literature and art, freed from Russian and German influences, began to express the thoughts of the people and to reflect the national life.

This progress, which had long dismayed the Barons, at last began to scare the Russians. The campaign to Russify the Baltic Provinces began. Its effects in Latvia were much the same as in Lithuania: Russian became the official language and the language of the courts and schools. Lettish schools were closed, Lettish journals suppressed, Lettish societies spied upon. The very name Latvia was forbidden, and the officials used every possible means

to restrict the new movement and bring it speedily to an end.

The Russians, however, were too late. The movement had spread too far. A nation had awakened from lethargy. Having had freedom within their grasp, the Letts did not let it lightly go. Their chance seemed to have come, as to Lithuania, with the Revolution of 1905 and an attempt was made to establish a free Republic, independent of Russia, but this the Imperial authorities were still strong enough to resist. Nevertheless, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of Latvia remained in existence for six weeks and the Lettish Revolutionary Army capitulated only on the promise of the Tsar to respect the autonomy of the new State.

The promise was kept no better than similar promises made to Lithuania. The Letts soon found how misplaced had been their confidence in the solemn engagements of the Tsar. Revenge, not autonomy, was meted out to them and the revolutionary movement was punished by Russian troops, energetically supported by the German-Balts who, with companies of cossacks and dragoons, went about the country burning homesteads and shooting or hanging the luckless peasants with their own hands. The Letts' appeal to the civilized world, a document printed in six languages and setting out the atrocities to which they had been subjected, passed unheeded. Once more the German-Balts became the true masters of Latvia. They retained the monopoly of industrial and commercial enterprises. Distilleries and mills might be built only on their land. The forests belonged to them almost entirely; they had the rights of hunting and fishing even on the property of the peasant farmers.

On the other hand, the revolutionary movement achieved something. It bound the nation to a common cause. Lettish again made its appearance in the schools. The national movement, so far from dying out, was continued with renewed vigour, loyally assisted by Letts who, after the Revolution, had fled to Finland, Switzerland, Denmark, France, England and the United States to escape the

consequences of their participation. Economic activity increased in spite of the German obstruction, and numerous co-operative societies were formed. The desire for independence became a passion. Then the war came and, as in Lithuania, national aspirations had to be put aside. The Letts were faced with a choice of evils, for at first it seemed that they had as little to gain from a victorious Russia as from a victorious Germany. Nevertheless, their detestation of Germany prevailed and they threw in their own lot with the Allied cause.

§ 4

For a while, as we have seen, Lithuania bore the brunt of the German advance in the Baltic, though the Lettish peasants and farmers suffered from the requisitions of the Russian military authorities and became even more severely oppressed by the German-Balts, whose sympathies naturally were, and always had been, with the Fatherland, in spite of the allegiance they owed to Russia. It is said that even before the outbreak of the war they co-operated actively with German Army Headquarters and that many of the foresters they employed were in reality German Staff Officers who, having had excellent opportunities for gathering topographical information, disappeared unobtrusively shortly before war was declared.

When Courland became menaced, however, the Russian authorities forced the inhabitants to lay waste their own countryside with their own hands. Crops were destroyed, farms—some fifteen thousand of them—burnt, factories dismantled and demolished, so that the invading enemy might find nothing to help him in his advance on Riga. Then the unhappy people were "evacuated" and over half a million, or three-quarters of the population of Courland, suffering incredible hardships, became refugees.

Although there were many Letts serving with gallantry and distinction in the Russian Army, they were at first refused the privilege of fighting in units of their own under their own officers. Eventually, however, on July 13, 1915, the formation of Lettish battalions under Lettish

generals was authorized, and to counteract the German Emperor's benevolent announcement that he was invading Latvia to liberate the Letts, the Tsar once more promised Latvia autonomy and granted the inhabitants equal rights with the German-Balts. As Professor Ozolin says, "Meaningless as this act was at this time, it served its purpose: some American journals greatly admired the good Tsar's commonsense."

The news that they were to have battalions of their own, however, brought the Lettish volunteers flocking to the colours, not only from Latvia and Russia, but from France, England and the United States.

It was a stirring appeal that called them.

"The future of the Lettish people is once more at stake," a passage of the proclamation runs. "After seven centuries of indescribable sufferings and shattered hopes our dreams of national regeneration must be realized at last. To-day or never! Sons of Latvia, it is on the field of battle that the fate of our country must be decided. You Letts of Livonia, you people of Latgalia, you men of Courland whose abandoned ploughs are rusting in the midst of your fields, the time is come to exchange the tools of the peasant for the glorious weapons of the warrior. The more we lose to-day, the more shall we gain to-morrow! Let these days of sorrow be also the beginning of an era of power and of love sealed by the union and the common effort of all the nation's sons. Brothers, this is the moment. Faith gives victory. Under the folds of the nation's flag go forward for the glorious future of Latvia!"

Soon the whole nation was under arms. Even young girls presented themselves at the recruiting stations, begging to be allowed to fight at their brothers' side. "A wave of enthusiasm roused all Latvia," says Mr. Arthur Toupine in his book *La Guerre et La Vérité*.* "A new era opened for the history of our country. The name of Lett took on a new popularity throughout the Empire. The Russian Press devoted whole columns of adulation. . . . I shall never forget those moments of happiness and pride of the

* p. 38 (translation).

Lettish people, those days of delirious excitement, when even the loss of the most important part of Livonia and the exodus of half a million Letts seemed forgotten in the general enthusiasm."

The first of the new Lettish battalions marched out of Riga at daybreak; a vast crowd of civilians gathered near the parade ground—a dark-clothed crowd amidst which were Lettish girls dressed all in white, with bunches of flowers in their hands, and as the troops moved off singing the Russian Anthem and the Hymn of Latvia, the girls showered them with rose leaves. The column marched toward the river and as they went the crowd increased to such numbers that it seemed as though not a Lettish regiment but the whole nation were moving off to war. Along the road that had been lately packed with homeless refugees passed the flower of the country, Latvia's hope. For the first time, after centuries of subjection, the Lettish people marched proudly with heads held high. To an onlooker it must all have seemed pathetic enough, this joy of a nation that by benign condecension was being allowed to defend its native land.

Nor was it long before the Lettish battalions justified the hopes their fellow-countrymen had placed in them. They fought with the passionate and selfless ardour of troops who have something real to fight for, something tangible to defend. When the Russians had failed, they succeeded. They drove the Germans from Livonia and through two years of incomparable sacrifices kept them out of Riga, their battalions earning, it is said, from Hindenburg the title of " the seven stars of the Riga-Dvinsk front " without which the town would have fallen " like a ripe berry " into the Kaiser's dish.

Had the Russians sent reinforcements to their decimated ranks, Riga might have held out till the end. But the Revolution rendered their sacrifices vain. The Russian troops withdrew from the Dvina front. The Germans entered Riga on September 3, 1917. Then Russia was proclaimed a Republic. By the end of the winter the greater part of Latvia was occupied, overwhelmed by the German

forces released from the Russian front. At Brest-Litovsk the Bolsheviks showed their gratitude to the Lettish Army by ceding Latvia to the Germans, and the German-Balts petitioned the German Emperor to accept the crown of Livonia for Prince Joachim.

The Armistice came like a dawn on Latvia's darkest hour. The opportunity held out was seized and on November 18, 1918, Latvia was proclaimed a free and independent State and was recognized by Great Britain, France and Japan—though not until later by the United States.

Had the German Army of Occupation been forced to withdraw from Latvia on the signing of the Armistice, the Letts might have been freed to work out their own salvation. Unfortunately it was decided that the Germans should be left in the Baltic States temporarily to cope with the Bolsheviks, among whose ranks, it must be noted, were many Letts. When the Bolshevik attack was launched in January, 1919, however, the Germans began to evacuate their positions, hoping thereby conveniently to seal the fate of the new Republic and leaving the hastily formed Lettish Liberty Army to face the situation.

Then followed what is perhaps the strangest three-cornered conflict in history. Latvia was occupied at the same time by the Letts, the Germans and the Bolsheviks. The German withdrawal was stopped by Graf von der Goltz, who was in command of the German Sixth Reserve Corps, on the Latvian-Estonian frontier; but then, instead of making any attempt to drive back the Bolsheviks, he began an attack on the Estonian troops, with whom the Letts were co-operating. With him was the Baltic Landeswehr, a force which had been organized by the Germans and recruited from the German-Balts and their retainers, with a stiffening of German regulars.

The Lettish and Estonian commanders were forced to draw upon their forces, which were already outnumbered, on the Bolshevik front, to meet this treacherous move; but, in spite of the odds they had to face, the Estonian and Lettish troops, working together, had driven the Germans back on Riga by the end of June.

Nevertheless, the Germans were far from being beaten and were receiving strong reinforcements of men and munitions from Germany. To prevent further bloodshed, therefore, and to save Riga from bombardment, an armistice was arranged by the representatives of the Allied (British and French*) Military Mission which had been sent out to assist the Baltic States in freeing themselves from the Germans and staying off the Bolsheviks, and also to help them in their work of reconstruction. The services this Mission rendered in those troublous times, when the young Republics were striving so hard to prevent their hardly won independence being snatched from them, have been gratefully acknowledged by all three States. It may be added that throughout Colonel du Parquet and the French representatives co-operated sympathetically and untiringly with the British.

After the Armistice the Germans withdrew from Riga, which was then reoccupied by the Letts, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Ulmanis, who had been forced to seek refuge on a ship during the temporary German occupation of Liepaja, whither the Government had moved, was reinstated in his capital amidst scenes of indescribable jubilation.

But soon the Letts had to face a new enemy, besides defending themselves from the Bolsheviks. Prince Lieven, a Russian-Balt who had been a distinguished officer of the former Russian Army and had been decorated with the British Military Cross, had organized a corps of repatriated Russian prisoners-of-war from Germany to fight under von der Goltz against the Bolsheviks. These troops had been paid, equipped and very well treated by von der Goltz, with the result that they became Germanized, and while Prince Lieven was lying in hospital seriously wounded one of his officers, Bermondt Avaloff, had, at the instigation of the Germans, obtained control of the corps. This notorious adventurer, a monarchist of Caucasian family, who is said to have had pretensions to the lost throne of the Tsar, had been the bandmaster of a Russian cavalry regiment and had become a commissioned officer during the war. Having

* Lieut.-Colonel du Parquet was Chief of the French Military Mission.

obtained control of Prince Lieven's troops he took over command of the forces of von der Goltz who, under pressure from the German Government, disappeared into plain clothes but remained to keep a watchful eye on events.

Bermondt established his headquarters at Jelgava and on October 8, 1919, began an attack on Riga, bombing the town from aeroplanes and bombarding it with heavy artillery. Two days later the southern part of the city fell into his hands and the southern bank of the Daugava was occupied. For a month the bombardment of Riga continued day and night, but the Letts, under their gallant Commander-in-Chief General Balodis, kept Bermondt's troops at bay. Once more the whole nation flocked to enlist in the defence of their country, and, having been strengthened by the arrival of war material from England, the Lettish Army took the offensive with such success that Bermondt's troops were thrown back, and Liepaja, with the assistance of the Allied warships, was cleared of the enemy, and Jelgava captured on November 21. The Letts, co-operating with the Lithuanians, then drove Bermondt to the south, and on November 25, at the request of another Allied Mission which had been sent from Paris to arrange a peaceful withdrawal, the Latvian Government arranged to cease fire for twenty-four hours to allow the main body to clear the frontier.

All this time the Letts had also been conducting operations against the Bolsheviks. After the armistice with the Germans Lieut.-Colonel the Honourable H. R. L. G. Alexander, D.S.O., M.C., of the British Political Mission,* took command of the Baltic Landeswehr—surely one of the strangest commands a British officer ever had. The German regulars in this force joined von der Goltz and, in the hope of lessening the hatred of the Letts against the Balts and in order to separate them from German influence, General Burt, who was in charge of the British Mission, arranged that they should be sent to the Bolshevik front. Unfortunately all attempts at reconciliation were frustrated by the conduct of Baron von Taube, Colonel Alexander's Chief of Staff and

* Now commanding the First Battalion of the Irish Guards.

an influential Balt, who was discovered to be sending wireless messages to Bermondt and to be planning to assist him in his attack on the Lettish troops.

Nevertheless, it is but fair to these troops to state that, under the Latvian Command and at a time when the Lettish Army was being reorganized, they played a great part in ridding the country of the invaders. Colonel Alexander speaks highly of their fighting qualities and to him, as their commander, they gave unhesitating loyalty and obedience, while his own personality won the confidence of the officers.

By the end of February, 1920, the last of the Bolshevik forces were driven out of Latgalia and Latvia was cleared of her enemies. Peace was concluded with Germany in July, 1920, and with Soviet Russia in August. Both countries undertook to recognize the *de jure* independence of Latvia, while the Bolsheviks renounced all claims to Latvian territory and promised to make restitution of the vast quantities of material, such as rolling stock and machinery, that had been carried off into Russia.

Thus, after fighting for eighteen months for the rights which should have been hers on the signing of the Armistice, Latvia came into her own at last. Herder's prophecy had been fulfilled. The Letts were to enjoy a better freedom than they had known.

## § 5

The new Republic, although freed from external aggression, was like a man who has succeeded to a ruined and impoverished estate with no money to repair it. The whole country, but particularly Latgalia, had suffered terrible devastation; live stock had disappeared; land had fallen fallow; factories had been destroyed. The population was reduced to three-quarters of its normal size, and the poor wretches who remained were homeless and eked out a miserable existence in the cellars of their former houses, in dug-outs or even in trenches which they roofed with wood and earth.

As may be imagined, the plight of the children, many of

them orphans, was the most distressing of all, and not only Latvia but her neighbours too owe more than can ever be told to the relief work performed by the American Mission, of which Commander John A. Gade was the Commissioner, with Major Orbison in charge of the Relief Administration and Colonel Edward W. Ryan of the Red Cross Commission. The Commission started operations, with its headquarters at Riga, at the end of 1919, and set itself to distribute clothing to the destitute and to establish homes for children. It fought epidemics of cholera and typhus ; it helped to support such hospitals as existed, and equipped many of them ; and at one time in Riga alone was feeding daily eighteen thousand under-nourished children from twelve kitchens.

As time went on the Commission came to devote itself entirely to child welfare ; children's clinics were set up at various centres in the three States, while motor dispensaries were equipped and driven into the devastated and thinly populated areas of eastern Latvia that the children might not be neglected. Even the unborn were cared for and the maternity clinics became an important part of the programme of mercy.

Nor was the " Amcross " content with this, for most wisely it helped the Baltic States to help themselves. Native nurses were trained—one of them was a Russian princess rescued from the street-sweeping gang in Riga—and American Red Cross Nurses, all child welfare specialists, gave practical demonstrations to mothers in the care of their babies ; and by showing them practical results, aroused their interest and encouraged them to apply the principles they learnt.

Through the medium of the clinics, to which native doctors and nurses were attached, the Commission had under its observation over one hundred thousand children, so that when in June, 1922, the time came for its activities to cease it was able to hand over a perfected organization to the Health Departments of the new Governments with the confidence that the work it had begun so nobly would be efficiently carried on. It was a splendid service and there

can be scarcely a Lett, or a Lithuanian or an Estonian living to-day who has not benefited from it in some degree. By their sacrifices and unselfish toil that little band of Red Cross workers should make the name of America loved and honoured in the Baltic States ever more, just as the similar and no less splendid work carried out by Lady Muriel Paget's Children Welfare Organization will leave a lasting memory of gratitude for the services rendered by her ladyship and her companions.

§ 6

On May 27, 1920, the Constituent Assembly proclaimed Latvia "an independent and indivisable Sovereign Commonwealth," and one of the first acts of the new Government was to pass an Agrarian Law, similar to that passed in Lithuania, to appease the land hunger of the disbanded peasant army.

The Supreme Council accorded *de jure* recognition in January, 1921. The Parliament, elected by universal adult suffrage, consists of one hundred men and women delegates who themselves elect a President by ballot for three years. Like that of Lithuania Minor, the majority of the population is Protestant, but the inhabitants of Latgalia have always remained Catholics and were untouched by the spread of Lutheranism; their religious interests are protected, while the rights of national minorities are guaranteed. Education has been an important part of the Government programme, primary and secondary schools have been set up all over the country and a new University established at Riga,* so that now it is claimed that there is scarcely 1 per cent of illiterates among the population.

The enlightened policy of the new Government, a policy of men who were, most of them, new to handling affairs of State but inspired by the staunch patriot Mr. Jan Tchakste, who is now President, has done much to ensure Latvia's progress since the war, while the clear-sighted efforts of Mr. Ringold Kalning, who was successful in stabilizing the

* See p. 191, where the subject of education in the Baltic States is dealt with.

Latvian currency after a devaluation which threatened the State with bankruptcy, have made possible the building up of agriculture, industry and commerce, the results of which will bring to the budget an increasing surplus. For once industry and agriculture have fully recovered—and they are recovering fast, though the industrial enterprises need capital—nothing can stop Latvia from taking her place amongst the thriving small nations of Europe, content to live true to the saying of her poet Rainis, " We are a small people, but as great as we desire."

## CHAPTER VIII

## A PROPHECY FULFILLED

Some enterprising Lettish journalists—The man who was walking round the world—A shattered illusion—Daugavpils, the Aldershot of Latvia—The persistence of the Baltic fly—Rafts from Russia—The greatest timber port in the world—Latvia's forests—Living on capital—Difficulties of timber firms—Crippled industries—The revival of trade—Latvia's importance to the world—Plans for the future—Lack of capital—Standard of living too high—Latvia's future—The Minister gives a hint.

### § 1

ONE of the most interesting developments in the new Republic has been the recovery of the Lettish Press. On the outbreak of war there were some sixty periodicals published in Lettish, of which twenty-seven were newspapers, ten dailies circulating in Riga alone. During the war many of these perforce suspended publication, but there are now twenty-four Lettish daily papers and periodicals, in addition to three Russian, five German and three Jewish publications

My first experience of the Press in Latvia was while shaving, the morning after I reached Riga, when, after a tap on my bedroom door, the head of a young man appeared and asked (somewhat timorously, for a journalist) if he might " draw " me. While admiring his enterprise in making sure of his prey before it sallied forth on its day's activities, I suggested that my face might present a more edifying spectacle when not covered with lather. Accordingly he returned later in the morning, bringing with him Mr. Arthur Toupine, the author, as I discovered, of *La Guerre et La Vérité*, a book in which the heroic exploits and sacrifices of the Lettish Army Corps are vividly described.

While Mr. Toupine, who was half-Lettish and half-Russian and spoke fluent French, kept me busy answering questions for an interview he intended to write for the Lettish and

Russian papers he represented, his friend sat in a chair and sketched. When he had finished with me, however, he did not leave me to my own devices as any other journalist would have done, but insisted on placing his services at my disposal with great goodwill.

"It is well that you have fallen into my hands," said he, beaming at me with his curious grey-green eyes. "It will be my business to help you see something of my country—the intimate life you might miss if you went alone. I will arrange everything."

Then, having hurried me to a photographer's to sit for a portrait he proposed to have published in the *Letas Illustrets Zurnals*, he went off to make his plans. Before I left Latvia I had reason to be grateful to him indeed.

The following morning, as I was trying to extract my passport from the hotel porter before starting off on a trip to Daugavpils—passports have to be surrendered at every hotel in the Baltic States and a fresh fee paid to the police in every town—another representative of the Press appeared. He too, it seemed, was an artist, and brought with him a fair lady whom I supposed (erroneously as it turned out) to be a Lettish woman journalist.

"English or French, for me it is the same thing," she declared serenely, her rosy cheeks dimpling at a joke I did not fathom till some time later.

"Let it be English, then," I said.

I settled her in a chair with coffee and a cigarette. She produced a list of questions, while the artist pulled out his sketch-book. As she began her interrogation I wondered why I found the phrasing of her sentences so delightful, until I realized that she was really thinking in French and translating—just as Joseph Conrad used to write. I began to wonder, too, what it was about the manner of herself and the artist that made them seem different from those I had become accustomed to in the Baltic States. I won't say that they were better or that they were worse, because manners, like morals, are largely a matter of geography—but just different. They puzzled me, this pair, and I wanted to ask questions instead of answering them.

She was just getting on to the delicate subject of my age when the artist burst out at her in Russian, a language of which I know only the words for *hors d'œuvres*, please and matches.

"My friend says," she interpreted, "that perhaps it would be more interesting if he could sketch you in the clothes you wear when *en voyage*."

I suppose I looked as mystified as I felt, for she went on:

"You wear perhaps a *gris* coat and open shirt? Yes?"

"No, mademoiselle," I said, "this old blue suit is good enough for the railways of the Baltic States . . . and for buffets where they sell you eggs that purport to be hard boiled and aren't." For a moment I brooded sombrely on the recollection of an unfortunate incident.

She seemed as mystified as I.

"And how much luggage have you?" she demanded.

"A couple of suit-cases," I told her.

"But you cannot port them upon your back at once?" she cried in amazement.

"No, indeed," I answered. "But if I can't find a porter I manage to lug them along with my two hands."

"But you do not go by train?"

"I do if no one provides me with a car. Or by steamer. Or I might even walk," I added as an afterthought.

"But I thought you *were* walking? Yes?"

"Walking? Where?" I asked, now thoroughly bemazed.

"Round the world," she said. "We read in a Russian paper that there had come to Riga an Englishman who was walking round the world. Walking across Russia, China, Japan and then the United States."

It is a dreadful thing to have to disappoint a fair lady. I felt as though I were a super who had been mistaken for an actor-manager—and found out. I hated myself for having to spoil a minor journalistic scoop. But I had to disillusion her, to explain that I was not what I seemed, and that since the war, when in very truth I had at times trudged what seemed several times round the world porting a well-filled British infantry pack upon my back, I had

adopted the good old army adage that third-class riding is always better than first-class walking.

I must say that both she and the young man took it very well and our laughter began a friendship. She told me that she had expected to find me a sort of monster with a red hairy face, but it was not till some time later that she confessed she was not a journalist at all. The artist was her brother, it appeared: their grandmother had been an Englishwoman who married a Swedish baron with estates in Latvia, their father a Pole by birth who had been a general in the Russian Army before the war. After the Revolution, she told me, they lost everything in Russia, including the family estates in the Caucasus, and she herself, having married a Russian doctor when she was twenty, had been imprisoned by the Bolsheviks in a tiny room where she remained for three months without seeing the daylight or being allowed to read or write or even change her clothes—all because she was the daughter of a Russian general. With her brother, who had been an officer in the Russian Guards, she had escaped across the frontier to Riga and on finding that her husband had thrown in his lot with the Bolsheviks she divorced him.

"I loved him," she told me quite simply, "but I could not live again with one who had joined the spoilers of my country. It would have been too terrible."

Now, having worked for two years with the American Red Cross, she was earning her living in a shipping-office while her brother was earning his by sketching for a Russian paper and learning Lettish so that he might serve his time in the Lettish Army as an officer and not as a private as he would otherwise have to do.

"I came to help my brother with his interview," she told me as we parted that morning, she to her office, I to catch the train to Daugavpils, "but I speak American more easily. I am a poor fish, and my English is a thing of the most terrible."

"I wish I could speak it half so attractively," I said sincerely.

"You are joking at me," she answered as she turned to go.

§ 2

The journey to Daugavpils, near the Polish frontier, takes six hours, though it is only about 150 miles, and the train stops at every station on the way. Except on the main line there are no first-class carriages on Latvian railways, and there is usually only one second-class coach ; so it behoves one to get to the station early, for long queues form up at the booking-office and the trains are always packed.

The line runs up the valley of the Daugava through flat, well-cultivated, hedgeless fields of corn and flax whose sameness is rather monotonous until it is broken suddenly by a little lake backed by a forest of pines. As in Lithuania, timber houses are scattered over the countryside with ladders running up the thatched or shingled roofs, but many of them have two stories instead of one. There seemed to be great building activity and one had the opportunity of seeing houses in all stages of construction. I noticed that the chimney, which in the modern houses is of brick, is built in the centre of the house and completed before the roofs and walls are put on the wooden framework.

Like Kaunas, Daugavpils was before the war an important Russian military fortress. The town is girt by great turf-covered ramparts and protected by a loop of the river on the west and south. The moat, now dry, is spanned by wooden bridges, but inside the main fort are lines and lines of barracks, the training grounds being on the plain beyond. Daugavpils is the Aldershot of Latvia, the chief training centre of the Lettish Army, and full of troops.

As I strolled one evening along the banks of the wide river, where groups of men and women were bathing naked, as they do in the Nemunas at Kaunas, a squadron of Lettish cavalry rode down the steep sandy bank to water their horses. They halted near the water's edge, dismounted, stripped and then rode their mounts out into the river, shouting and splashing, both men and horses enjoying the bath. It was a picture that Tuke ought to have been there to paint. Then, at a word of command from their officer,

they fell in, put on their shirts and shorts, and rode away, singing as they went.

Daugavpils itself is an ordinary Russian garrison town and the greater part of its inhabitants are Jews, mainly shopkeepers who, so far as I could see, lived not like the Chinese by taking in each other's washing, but by taking each other's photographs. I have never seen so many photographers in any town, large or small, but they probably owe their existence more to the passport regulations than to any inordinate vanity on the part of the inhabitants.

There is a large agricultural population in the surrounding country—the former district of Latgalia, whose people never came under the influence of the Lutheran Reformation and have remained Catholics, most of them, to this day, and having in the past been cut off from the rest of Latvia they have remained backward. They are still the least progressive part of the population and it is only amongst them that illiterates may still be found in Latvia.

There is little enough of interest in the town. The Centrale Hotel is as crude as it is cheap—a night's lodging costs but 20 pence; the servants are incivil, anyhow to strangers, and in the bedrooms are many flies that make sleep impossible after the dawn has come. They are quite undefeatable, these flies, and the fruitless attack I made upon them with a towel before retiring brought back to my memory an incident that happened to a friend of mine who was once a prisoner of war in a Bulgarian hospital. His trouble was bugs, not flies, and he was putting up a gallant fight when a philosophic Russian, who had been watching him from the next bed, leant over and said:

"No good, Johnny. No catch all."

It was the same with the Baltic flies. You couldn't catch all, and one was as devastating as a battalion.

The cobbled streets of Daugavpils are hot and dusty in August, and, like all streets in the Baltic States, intolerably tiring for foreigners who are not in training for walking round the world. The most interesting thing in the town is the market where, in the main square before the Orthodox Church, its green domes and white walls looking refreshingly

TIMBER FLOATING DOWN THE DAUGAVA

A TIMBER RAFT

ool on a hot day, the Catholic peasants chaffer with the Jews.

But on the banks of the river you may find romance watching the great rafts of timber from the Polish and Russian forests drifting down the stream to Riga and the sea. These rafts are often over two hundred feet long, made of logs (cut into short lengths) tied together with wire with others flung haphazard on top of them. The raftsmen are chiefly Russians, gypsies whose rafts take the place of caravans and whose high road is the tawny river. For weeks on end they live upon these rafts, steering with a huge wooden helm, sleeping in the little grass huts and cooking their food over a fire of sticks as they drift along.

§ 3

Before the war Riga was the greatest timber port of the world. The value of the trade was something like two and a half millions sterling and was fed by the Daugava and its network of waterways, amounting to over five thousand miles and extending far into Russia. But apart from the transit trade, there are in Latvia itself some five million acres of forest, four million of which are now State-owned and the majority suitable for exploitation.

According to official figures the capital value of this State asset is £17,000,000. In the years after the war the new Republic, being pressed for money, was forced to draw upon this capital: in 1920 seven million cubic feet were exported alone, and in 1921 fourteen million. The Latvian Forestry Department gives the amount available for cutting yearly—to enable the State to live on the interest not on the capital—as some one hundred and twenty million cubic feet, but of course this is not all available for export. The demand for timber for new farm buildings in the devastated region of Latvia has been enormous—sixteen million cubic feet were devoted to this purpose in 1921 alone; this brings in no revenue, but, as the old farms are rebuilt and the landless families become settled, the drain on the country's timber will automatically cease. Since there

is no coal in Latvia, vast quantities of timber that might have been more profitably used have gone in fuel for railways and factories, but now coal is being imported and peat, large quantities of which are obtained from the bogs, is being utilized, while the Government has under consideration a project for utilizing the water-power of the Daugava, from which energy equivalent to three million tons of coal could be derived.

Under the Peace Treaty between Latvia and Soviet Russia the Government was promised a concession of a quarter of a million acres of forest for the reconstruction of the devastated areas, but owing to the chaotic condition of the Russian railways the exploitation of the Russian forests has been impossible, and the transit trade has also suffered badly. The industries which depend on wood for raw material—paper mills, cellulose and match factories, and wood distilleries—have also been cramped, and many of the factories still lack machinery, which was either destroyed or carried off to Russia during the war, so that at present the bulk of the timber is exported either in the shape of logs or sawn wood.

The Latvian forests are mainly coniferous, though considerable stands of oak, elder and birch occur. The soft woods, red and white, are those chiefly worked and the mills stand on the river bank at Riga, where the timber can be conveniently floated in. The labourers employed are mostly Lettish, both men and women, and I was told that the Letts are found to be more intelligent and harder-working than any of the neighbouring races. The women earn 1s. 6d. a day, the men from 2s. 6d. to 6s. or 7s., according to grade. After what Latvia has been through it is hardly surprising not to find such up-to-date machinery as equips the mills of America or even of great timber-producing countries like Formosa or Borneo. That, one must imagine, will come with increased prosperity.

The Government has placed a very heavy export duty on timber, now 30s. a standard or nearly double the duty charged at Klaipeda. At one time the duty was as much as £2 per standard and threatened to crush the timber industry.

t is still a heavy drag, but is being decreased as circumtances permit.

The export of props over eight feet long is forbidden, ince so many are still required for reconstruction purposes nd the chief trouble about the timber market is that the nills, of which there are fifty in the neighbourhood of Riga, annot get enough wood. At present the Government sells he standing timber by auction in small lots only, partly vith the object of rounding off the forest area conveniently, ut more to encourage healthy competition, since the feeling s that if the forests were sold in large blocks, as they were n the days of the Baltic Barons and still are in Poland, only he wealthy merchants would buy and bidding would not be elatively so high.

This is a legitimate point of view, but the small blocks often give the buyer an incredible amount of trouble, ince he has continually to move his men and gear about rom place to place, thereby losing time and incurring extra xpense, particularly as the timber cannot be transported s soon as it is cut, but must wait till the winter, when it is ulled out over the snow by horses as far as the nearest iver, and is then left, being held by the ice until the spring eleases it. Instead of entering the auction ring themselves nost of the timber men in Riga now prefer to buy secondand from the Jews who, they say, are in a better position o carry out the cutting in the forest and the transporting f the timber to Riga, as well as to cope with the official bstructionists who frequently create difficulties in order hat by removing them they may augment their salaries.

I did not hear much good of the Lettish officials from anyone in Riga (though, for the matter of that, does one ever hear good of an official anywhere ?) and most business men I met bewailed the lost days of the Russian control—now never likely to return, anyhow as it was before the war. But on the subject of the high export duty I found opinions divided. The manager of one firm told me that he regarded the 30s. duty per standard as an advance from the Government. He argued that the buyer allowed for the amount of the duty when bidding and that if the duty were removed

the bidding would automatically go up, since the buyer would be able to pay more : this, however, would not suit the actual exporters, since they would have to pay the higher price, or anyhow part of it, as soon as they had bought from the middleman and so would lock up their money for several months ; whereas when the extra amount was paid in export duty the sum did not become due until after the winter months, by which time the timber had reached the mill and was ready to be sent out of the country.

§ 4

As well as being Russia's chief outlet for timber before the war, Latvia also produced a quarter of Russia's metal manufactures, which were centred mainly at Riga and Liepaja, and turned out goods to the value of over four million sterling every year. The chemical, textile and mineral industries were almost equally valuable, though Latvian producers were cut off from obtaining supplies of raw materials, particularly minerals and metal ores, from Western Europe owing to the high protective tariffs imposed by the Russian Government.

The war shattered this industrial prosperity, anyhow for a time. The machinery was rifled by the Russians ; the factories themselves were destroyed. The metal and chemical industries alone lost 95 per cent of their former equipment. As one drives along the great highway that runs north-east from Riga to Petrograd one may see some of these terrible results : great gutted buildings, ruined and empty, waiting for capital to repair them and start them again. It is a depressing spectacle. Russia has promised restitution, but most of the machinery that has been restored is damaged. Moreover, Latvia lost thirty thousand railway trucks, barely fifteen hundred of which have been returned. And Russia, the nearest and previously the most important customer, is dead.

Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties with which the young Republic has been faced, and in spite of the lack of capital available for starting new enterprises or reorganizing

ld ones, a beginning is being made. In 1914 there were ne hundred thousand industrial workers in Riga alone; n 1920 this number had dwindled to twelve thousand for he whole country, but to-day forty thousand are employed, t present mainly in supplying local needs, the most impor- ant concerns being the woollen and cotton mills and the ubber factories, which turn out anything from waterproofs o tyres. Besides this, even now Latvia is able to compete n the European market with her glass, preserves, linoleum, natches, yarn, needles, hides and tobacco, nails, paper and ummel. The principal exports are timber, flax, butter and ggs, and the principal imports: coal, iron and iron ore, otton, rice, textile fabrics, chemicals, machinery, sugar, vheat and flour.

After the war the country had become so far from being elf-supporting that she was forced to import six times he value of her exports, but although exports are still mall compared with former years (150,000 tons of flax, 7,000 of Latvian origin, were shipped before the war as gainst 8,000 in 1920 and 25,000 in 1924) imports and xports are now almost equally balanced, and this in spite f the condition of Russia. It is interesting to note that vhile Great Britain takes nearly half Latvia's exports and ells her less than one-fifth of her needs, Germany takes ess than one-tenth and sells her half, whereas Russia is now esponsible for but 4 per cent of Latvia's imports and xports.

It will be seen then that Latvia is making good indepen- lently of Russia, with whom formerly her prosperity was o intimately bound, since before the war one-fifth of all Russian imports and over one-quarter of her exports passed hrough Latvian territory. And for the development of her rade Latvia is excellently equipped in the matter of harbours and internal communications. All parts of the country are connected by rail (there are nearly two thousand miles of line) with the ports of Riga, Liepaja and Ventspils, nd Latvia herself possesses a small merchant fleet of her own.

It is the harbours of Latvia that make the country of

such importance not only for Russia herself, but for all countries that trade with Russia, since they have the most direct railway connections with Russia's commercial and industrial centres. Even before the war, the foreign trade of Riga was greater than that of Petrograd, which is icebound for seven months in the year ; and although Riga itself is closed to navigation for about five or six weeks in the winter, Liepaja and Ventspils, which are connected with Riga by rail, are almost entirely ice-free.

Since the war the foreign trade of the Latvian ports has not been much more than one-tenth of what it was in 1914. But it is increasing yearly and the Government is working to improve existing facilities, so that Latvia may be able to take advantage of the transit trade which must surely come to her as soon as Russian markets are again accessible to Western producers. The harbour of Ventspils is being deepened in order to make it accessible to large ocean-going steamers, while a floating dock is contemplated for Riga, together with an extension of the export harbour. It will also be necessary to build fresh elevators at these ports and to repair the great store-houses. A submarine signal station, reconstruction of light-houses and enlarged Customs houses—for these things and much else besides money will have to be found. The Government has also plans for developing and extending the existing railway system ; a reorganization of the Riga junction is inevitable owing to the rapidly increasing traffic ; double tracks are to be laid down on several lines, and more rolling-stock is to be provided.

## § 5

The trouble is that in the Baltic States at the present time it is easier to draw up attractive plans for spending money than to find the money to spend, for such capital expenditure cannot be met out of the ordinary budget. Latvia's difficulty is that she has no accumulation of capital. She is in the same plight as Lithuania. Where there is capital, there is credit, and Latvia needs credit above all things, for if she is faced suddenly with a crisis she will have little in reserve.

In Mr. Ringold Kalning, who at the time of my visit was Minister of Finance,* the Latvian Government has a man who has done much to secure Latvia's economic prosperity. He is a strong man (too strong for some) and since he is one of the few very rich men in the Baltic States he can afford to be entirely independent and disinterested. He is as fearless as he is honest, and is acknowledged to be the most brilliant financier in the Baltic States.

When he assumed office the Ministries of Finance and of Trade and Industry were united under his control; he at once abolished most of the monopolies that had been created, retaining only those on flax and spirits, and in order to secure a trade balance increased import and export duties, placing, to prevent money going out of the country, an almost prohibitive duty on all goods that were not necessaries of life or essential for the development of industry and agriculture; at the same time he protected home industries and allowed free transit. Subsequently trade agreements were concluded with various countries and manufactured goods were freed from export duty. In this way he was successful in stabilizing the Latvian rouble and introduced a gold standard, 1 lat being equal to 1 gold franc; the annual budget now balances—anyhow on paper, for during the fiscal year of 1924–25 supplementary estimates were necessary, owing to an agricultural crisis caused by exceptionally bad weather conditions, and a correspondingly poor harvest in 1923.

Nevertheless, the expenses of the young State are still heavy. Beside the capital required for reconstruction, the army and education make heavy inroads upon the revenue; industry had to be subsidized to some extent and it has been necessary to create a State Land Bank to enable loans to be made to the impoverished farmers, as well as to small agricultural undertakings.

What Latvia needs undoubtedly is foreign credit and the introduction of foreign capital. One of the things that certainly will not attract foreign business men to start enterprises in the country is the number of tedious restrictions and the generally obstructive attitude of

* He has since been succeeded by Mr. J. Blumberg.

petty officials, of whom I heard complaints everywhere I went. Then although there are many banks in Latvia it appears to be difficult to get business done with despatch and efficiency. The system, already referred to, of having one man to do a job and others to check him, is just as prevalent in the Banks as in Government offices, and one British resident told me it took so long to pay money in and to get it out, and that such interminable difficulties were made over the smallest transactions, that he had given up keeping an office banking account at all. The fact that it invariably took me at least twenty minutes each time I wanted to get a fiver from the Riga Commercial Bank on my letter of credit will give some idea of the trouble foreign firms must have to transact their business.

Nor do the Letts appear to encourage foreign enterprise as they might, though there are signs of improvement. For instance, it is only quite recently that foreign samples were allowed to come into the country by the Post Office by letter—formerly they had to go through the Customs. The officials argued that since a yard of material has value, so even a small fraction of a yard must have a value, however small, and insisted on duty being paid, added to which the firm had to bear the expense and delay of the parcel post.

This lack of co-operation is not confined to the Government but also made itself felt when a British-Latvian Chamber of Commerce was proposed, for the Letts desired that only British firms actually operating in the country should be represented, not British-speaking agents. A committee of four British and four Lettish business men was formed to explore the possibilities of forming a Chamber, but the whole proposal broke down because the Letts insisted on having two Lettish directors to one British.

These matters and others like them are enough to keep away foreign capital and to deter more foreign business firms from taking an active interest in the development of the country. The Letts cannot have it both ways, and if they want outside co-operation they must be prepared to offer more facilities than they do at present.

Another great difficulty is the tariff. The Latvian Government promised originally to allow machinery into the country free of duty, but although concessions have been made in individual cases this promise has not been generally kept and the object is rather to make the revenue derived from such duty pay for reconstruction of the devastated area.

However, undesirable as these duties may seem to the foreign business firms they have undoubtedly achieved their object in obtaining the revenue that was so badly needed. Desperate needs mean desperate remedies and now that Mr. Kalning has achieved his object it is probable that the duties will be gradually reduced.

§ 6

Mr. Kalning, who speaks English well and volubly, received me very kindly when I went to see him; his magnificent office, the enforced legacy of Russia, is a contrast to the Government offices of Kaunas. He immediately gives one the impression of being what is called a live wire, with pince-nez, a tawny spade beard and the most marvellous set of gold teeth I have ever seen.

He spoke his mind freely.

"Our expenditure is still too high for so young a country," he declared, when I congratulated him on the success of his fiscal policy. "For one thing we have too many Government officials and they work only six hours a day. That is not enough for a man to work in a country like this, and many of them take other work as well. I should like to see the number of our officials halved and those that remain made to work eight hours or more a day."

I asked him how much the average taxation was per head.

"Ninety lats a year—nearly four pounds of your money," he replied. "To you it will not seem much. And I sometimes think our people are too well off. They have adopted too high a standard of life. In an old and properous country like yours a farmer may be able to afford to work only a few hours a day if he chooses. In a young country like

ours it is otherwise. Our people should work unceasingly and for a while they should be content to go without the comforts and luxuries of life. But they do not!" He thumped on his desk to emphasize his words and glared at me under his bushy eyebrows. "I will give you an example. They export only 10 per cent of the butter they make, and eat up the rest themselves. So that Latvia does not yet export enough butter to pay for the amount of sugar she imports."

"And the remedy?" I asked him.

"They should live on margarine," he answered, "and keep all their best produce to send away."

Mr. Kalning is noted for the simplicity of his own life, in spite of his great wealth, and he impressed me, more than any of the high officials I met in the Baltic States, with his intense devotion to his country's cause and to her development as one of the small nations of Europe. It was easy to see that he would be ruthless in securing the ends he had in view, and he told me he acted on the principle that the best safeguards against Bolshevism were sound finance and sound education.

He himself felt no fears for the future. He did not consider that Latvia had more to fear from Russia than any small State has always to fear from a bigger neighbour. Russia would not worry Latvia so long as her transit trade was secure—and as it was the rate for Russian goods in transit over the Latvian railways were considerably lower than those in Russia herself. Even if they were raised, shippers would still prefer to use Latvian ports rather than Petrograd: in Latvia they could hold goods destined for Russia until paid against bills of lading—in Russia one never knew what one could hold.

"I will give you one thought," he said to me as I rose to leave. "Many foreigners are coming to our country now. Most of them have one idea only: what can they get out of Latvia? They do not think what can they do for her. But perhaps you, an English writer, will be different."

"The best service I can do Latvia," I answered, "is what I am going to do. To tell the English-speaking people what

Latvia is, what she has suffered, what she is doing and what she wants. We know so little of you, and with knowledge comes confidence and understanding."

"True," he said, displaying again that wonderful set of teeth. "But will anyone read your book?"

"One can but try to make them," I told him as I shook his hand.

## CHAPTER IX

## THE NEW FARMERS

A trip to Courland—An expropriated estate—Unknown soldier and Baltic baroness—The experiment of Colonel Ozols—A cock with nothing to crow about—The rise of a new Order—Conditions of agricultural labour—The results of Agrarian Reform—The dispossessed nobility—Sigulda Castle—The prince who lives in a cattle-shed—The story of the Virtuous Maiden—How a river was navigated without oar or sail—The question of compensation—A dangerous element—Settling the destitutes upon the land—Triumphant results—The pianist who turned farmer—The State Dairy School—A Lettish dairy—Why Latvia is moving to prosperity.

§ 1

I HAD not long returned from my trip to Daugavpils when I found that my journalist friend Toupine had been as good as his word and had arranged to take me on an expedition into Courland to see some of the best agricultural districts of Latvia. I was in excellent company, for Mrs. Toupine accompanied us. I have said that Toupine himself was half-Lettish and half-Russian; his wife was half-English and half-French, so that in their three children the blood of Eastern and Western Europe is equally balanced.

On our arrival at Riga station I perceived that Toupine, as becomes a journalist, was an experienced traveller, for having taken third-class tickets for himself and his wife (the Government of Latvia had kindly provided me with a free pass on the railways) he installed us in a crowded carriage with wooden benches, and as soon as the train started moved us into the first-class restaurant-car, where we breakfasted until, having passed through Jelgava (Mitau) we reached Meitené, our destination. Here we were met by Colonel J. Ozols, who has a record of high distinction in the Lettish Army.

The Colonel greeted us warmly and we drove off in his

rosky to see the estate of Count Medem, one of the Baltic Barons who have been dispossessed. As we entered the park we saw the sun shining on the white façade of the chateau. But the windows, instead of being sunlit too, were just gaps in the walls, for glass and woodwork were gone. The great white house was like a ghost, for you could see through it to the woods beyond. The roof had fallen in and only the shell of those white walls remained. The old chateau, built about 1770, which once stood beside the latter building, had suffered even more, and within its shattered walls was nothing but a mass of charred bricks and slabs of broken marble.

The retreating Russians had done their work thoroughly enough.

Behind the ruined buildings is a glorious park, and there we found a little memorial chapel dedicated to a great lady of the Baron's family. Her marble statue had had the head and hands broken off by the Bermondt troops, and the pedestal on which it stood, where the family arms were displayed, had been broken open and rifled in a search for treasure.

We crossed a stone bridge, guarded by a pair of now headless sphinxes, with shattered iron gates and broken colonnades, to a little cemetery, formed into an island by a diverted stream. It had been made apparently by the present Baron, for beneath the shade of its young cypresses there were but two graves. One was the polished granite tomb of the Baroness von Offenburg, who had lived to the ripe old age of ninety-five. The other was the resting-place of an unknown Lettish soldier, marked by a broken cross of silver birch. There they slept, those two, in that island cemetery : the proud Baroness, descendant of the conquering Swordbearers, shared the peace of that quiet spot with the unknown warrior who, like his ancestors seven centuries before, had given his life for Latvian liberty and now slept in soil that had been freed from the Barons' rule at last.

Baron Medem, Toupine told me, had ten other estates in Latvia, all of which were expropriated and divided

amongst the landless by the Government, which had offered to leave him the ruined chateau and a couple of hundred acres at Meitené as consolation.

"Did he accept?" I asked.

"Pas du tout," replied Toupine. "Il est fâché. Il cracha. Il partit."

This description of the outraged Baron spitting upon the face of Latvia and betaking himself to Germany to live on anything he had saved from the storm, seemed to me as graphic as Cicero's famous "Abiit, excessit, evasit, erupit." Since he refused the Government's offer, the "centre" of the estate has been left. Cattle and sheep wander in the shadows of the ruined chateau; the apples in the orchard drop unheeded—though Toupine and I accounted for a few; the modern brewery, built by the Baron, stands inactive, and it will be many a long day before another game of bowls is played in the roofed alley which stands in the centre of the woods. And as we wandered along an avenue of young lime-trees, whose shade the Baron will never know, I felt that I needed the philosophy of Southey's Old Kaspar to dispel the sadness which the sight of the fruits of even the most famous victory must bring.

§ 2

We drove from Meitené to the estate of Colonel Ozols at Vec-Platené, along the road used by the column of Napoleon's Army that advanced under Macdonald to attack Riga (unsuccessfully) in 1812.

The Colonel's estate also belonged before the war to one of the Baltic nobility, Baron Hahn, and by a happy chance the chateau escaped destruction. As we drove up in the drosky we saw the Baron's crest, a crowing cock, adapted from his name, above the entrance. To me he seemed a pathetic sight, that cock, for there was little enough for him to crow about: yet there he was, as immortal and as far from disenchantment as the minstrel on Keats's Grecian Urn. He stood serenely indifferent to the vicissitudes that had visited the noble house whose emblem he was. Like the

THE CHATEAU OF BARON MEDEM, MEITENÉ

A LATVIAN FARM
After Spring floods

minstrel, he could not leave his song. As I looked at him I thought of Keats's lines:

> "And, happy melodist, unwearied
> For ever piping songs for ever new."

And indeed he piped amidst departed glories. In other days we should have pulled up beneath the happy melodist in a carriage drawn by a pair of fine horses, not in a tumble-down drosky; trim lawns and well-tended beds ablaze with flowers would have met our eyes instead of a bedraggled garden; we should have sat in rooms grandly (though doubtless uncomfortably) furnished, whereas now many of them were empty and in sad repair.

By this I do not mean to disparage my kindly host. Periods of transition are nearly always sad and the estate—like all Latvia—is undergoing a period of transition now. For the Colonel is making an experiment. He and a few associates have rented two thousand acres of the Baron's former property from the Government and are farming it, paying, he told me, the equivalent of £150 in rent and £300 in taxes. He devotes most of his time to growing corn, but also raises a certain amount of stock. Like the farmers of Lithuania, he finds the English Large Whites do well, and it was interesting to see an old woman driving home a large herd of pigs, sheep and cattle at sundown. Besides its own mill—all the windmills in the Baltic States are built of wood—the estate is well supplied with water power and has its own farriery and wool-combing plant.

It is an interesting experiment and it is to be hoped that it, and others like it, will succeed. If it does, a new order will arise in Latvia, an order of Lettish landlords working Lettish land with Lettish labourers. I was particularly impressed by the happy and almost paternal relations that seemed to exist between the Colonel and his men. At present his chief trouble is lack of capital; he has no money to spend on "eyewash" and very sensibly does not worry about keeping up appearances. There will be time to think about them later and in the meantime there is nothing slovenly about the way he farms his land. He is devoting his

time and money to obtaining practical results by adopting modern methods of agriculture, and if he cannot afford horses and grooms and servants and as many gardeners as the estate had in the days when the Hahns were in possession, it is all the more to his credit that he should be prepared to do without them and to concentrate on his main purpose. The rest will come in time, it is to be hoped. Once the estate is set in order, the cock may yet crow over a domain that will be no less prosperous—and certainly happier—than of old.

§ 3

We lunched with the Colonel and his sister-in-law on a stone terrace overlooking the garden and spent the afternoon wandering round the great kitchen-gardens, picking raspberries and currants, or strolling in the woods of pine and birch in which, on a hill girt by a little stream, once stood an ancient castle.

The Colonel spoke to me much of his men and of the conditions under which they worked. The system is that prevalent throughout the State. All agricultural labour is divided into four classes. In the first class are the hands who are permanently employed, most of them married men with families. Their pay is only about 4s. a week, but they are allowed free quarters, oil and wood, and are given an acre of land to make a garden of their own. They also receive enough rye for their bread and may mill it in the estate mill. They have the right to buy from the estate three pigs, a cow and a sheep ; they may keep the offspring and graze their animals on the estate pasture ; in the winter their animals may be housed in the estate barns and hay is provided for the cattle. They keep the wool and the skins from their own sheep ; they usually kill two or three during the winter for meat. The women work on the estate about seventy days in the year, chiefly in the spring and autumn. They take it in turns to tend the sheep, one being on duty a week at a time, and they also help with the pigs, but the cattle are tended by the men.

The working year of the farms begins on April 23, St. George's Day. Only on this day may the permanent

bourer leave the estate, and if he wishes to leave he must ve three months' notice beforehand. This rule applies so to the master who wishes to dismiss one of his hands. he Colonel told me that in practice few changes are made, nd the workers remain on the estates for years.

The second class of labourers are those who work on an state for six months of the year, say from April to September. They may be either men or women, but they are sually unmarried. They too are given accommodation—ne common-room for the men and one for the women, and hey may either cook their own food or board with one of the amilies of permanent workers. They have no right to keep lomestic animals, but they receive half the amount of corn iven to the permanent workers, and also clothes, boots and tockings, and 4s. a week.

More numerous than these are the workers in the third lass, who are taken on for shorter periods of a month or wo in spring, summer or autumn. They receive a higher ate of pay—the men 12s. 6d. a week and the women 8s., ut they are not given the other perquisites, though they are rovided with a place to sleep in and have their meals ooked for them in the master's kitchen.

The last class are the casual labourers, who are employed by the day during a busy period, such as haymaking or getting in the potato crop. They are given their meals and a bed if they remain more than one night, the men receiving 2s. a day, the women 1s.

Latvia has few villages, as we know them in England, and so every big estate has its own shop where the labour force may supply its simple needs. These shops are very like those that are to be found on every rubber estate in the East, with the difference that whereas on a European estate in the East the manager is not permitted by the Board of his company to be directly interested in the sale of goods to his labour force, in Latvia the shops are controlled by the landowner. In the old days of the Barons this custom led to abuses, for, since there was no competition, articles were sold at whatever rate the landlord thought fit. In the shop on Colonel Ozols' property the goods seemed

reasonably enough priced, but even so, seeing that human nature is what it is, the Government of Latvia will do well to institute some system of efficient inspectorship to see that the landworkers are not exploited.

§ 4

Agrarian reform has taken the same course in Latvia as in Lithuania. It is unnecessary, therefore, to dwell upon the details. Before the war, although half the population was engaged in agricultural pursuits, seventy-two out of every hundred were landless. The small farmers, or "grey barons" as they were called, from their homespun clothes, did not number four thousand. The greater part of the agricultural land and the forests was in the hands of the German-Balts. One, for instance, near the Colonel's property, had half a million acres. Others had over a million, with twenty great houses scattered about the country.

Save perhaps for that of Poland and Roumania, where equally large estates were in existence, the Baltic nobility was the richest aristocracy in Europe. Their extravagance was on a like scale; they took to living in Paris, Berlin or St. Petersburg, and when their exchequers became depleted they would sell off, or rent, part of their vast estates to such Letts as could afford them, and it was in this way that the small farmer class arose. Even, so, however, the emancipated peasants were still forced to give their old masters certain service, and this is the origin of the custom of the women working for a specified number of days on the landlords' estates.

When the country was faced with the Bolshevist menace, the new Government made the same promises to the landless as had been made in Lithuania and for the same reasons. These promises were kept. As Mr. W. J. Reddaway has said, "When the Barons offered one-third of their estates to Germany in order that two or three million German colonists might dispossess the Letts, they sealed the doom of their order."*

* Section on the Baltic Provinces in *The Baltic and Caucasian States*, p. 117.

The former owners were expropriated and some two thousand estates were divided amongst new proprietors in lots varying from five to fifty acres, the former owners, when they were not considered to have fought or intrigued against the State, being left with one hundred and fifty acres and their buildings as compensation. When a proprietor had two or more estates, he was allowed to choose which he would keep, and in some instances an extra allowance of land was made if he had sons. Some of the former owners, like Baron Medem, have left the country, but the Colonel told me that of some two thousand Barons who were expropriated there are nearly fifteen hundred who have remained in the country.

They have remained, it may be supposed, because they have nowhere else to go; whereas ten years ago they lived in splendour, now they exist in poverty, and see the lands that were inherited from generation to generation of their families in the hands of those who were once their serfs.

However inevitable, however justified this new state of affairs may be, to the visitor from a land of great estates the plight of this fallen nobility, not all of whom were indifferent to the Lettish cause, is not a little sad, and having heard all about the necessity for the reform from the Letts I was glad to be able to hear something of the other side.

The opportunity came owing to the good offices of my friend Mr. John Chapman, of the United States Legation.* Chapman is a keen fisherman and Latvia is a fisherman's paradise, for you may fish in any water you please, since nothing is preserved, while the Letts themselves are in the habit of building near the mouths of the rivers a series of elaborate traps stretching from bank to bank to catch the fish (mostly sea-trout and salmon) as they go up-stream or down; it is rather a wicked practice since it prevents large numbers of fish from getting up-river to spawn in September and October; and those that do elude the traps are sought out at night in their shallow spawning-places by the Letts,

* Now Third Secretary of the United States Embassy in London.

who dazzle the fish with lighted torches and spear them with long tridents.

Chapman, who naturally abhorred such methods, would take me out on his week-end fishing expeditions in his Ford, and we would spend the day in a perfect little valley crowned with pine trees, where the grassy banks sloped gently to a swiftly flowing rivulet such as grayling love.

On one of these trips we turned off the main road to Petrograd at Sigulda (Segewold), a little township with new wooden houses springing up on every side, to call on Prince Krapotkin, who comes of a distinguished Russian family, and his sister Baroness Mengden, whose husband, a Baltic Baron with large properties in Latvia, was killed during the war.

And here I saw what I desired to see, the other side of the picture. The story of the Letts and their tribulations is sad enough in all conscience, but at least it is of the past : their present, in spite of their difficulties, is a happy one, and their future, if all goes well, will be happier still. But these representatives of a fallen order, although they have had a splendid past, have nothing but a hopeless present and little more than a hopeless future. For the young Prince—he was no more than twenty-one—with his widowed sister and her two children, was living, a few yards from the castle that would have been his by inheritance, in the stables where his father had kept his cattle, stalls which had been converted into a two-roomed cottage. Even that they were allowed only on sufferance and did not know when they would have to leave.

They received us with dignity, just as they would have received us in their ancestral home, and not a word of complaint escaped their lips. The Prince, who is now a private in the Lettish Army, and, like his sister, speaks English perfectly, volunteered to show me the home that had once been his. We walked up to the summit of the wooded hill where stands the ruined castle, built by one of the Barons about the year 1300, and destroyed during the Swedish wars. It came to the Krapotkin family by marriage about two centuries ago, and the family coat-of-arms can

still be seen over the noble gateway that in olden days was approached by a drawbridge which spanned a precipice, long since filled in with earth to make a road.

Nothing but this gateway, the ruined walls, the dungeon and part of the chapel remain, but on the outside wall of the chapel the Cross of the Teutonic Order, in red brick against the grey stone, still stands defying the ravages of time. Beneath the shadow of the walls Lettish picnickers, in Sunday best, munched bread and sausages amidst a litter of paper refuse that others, like an ebbing tide, had left behind.

Close by the ruins is the new "castle," an unlovely building of granite, with pseudo-battlements and a tower at one end. Even the Prince admitted that it was not beautiful, but contended that it was original. It was certainly that. It is now let out as a Residential Hotel and was packed with Lettish tourists; and it was necessary for the Prince meekly to ask permission to show us over.

The stairway up the tower led through three bedrooms, one upon the other, in one of which, at our unheralded approach, a lady boarder caught rising a little late dived suddenly behind a screen. From the roof of the tower the whole of the wooded valley of the Gauja lay spread before us. Far away, on the hills beyond the river, I caught a glimpse of Tridon Castle, which was built even before Sigulda and is now a school; and farther east, on the same range—almost the only hills in Latvia—rises the red-brick tower of Cremon. The Prince told me that all three castles were formerly connected by a subterranean passage which has now fallen in, though the entrance on the Sigulda side can still be seen.

Below Cremon I could just make out a black shadow on the hillside. This is the famous Gutmann's Cave, from which issues a spring that is believed to have healing properties. The story goes that there was once a serving-maid of Cremon Castle who was in love with one of the gardeners of Tridon. But the Baron himself had taken a fancy to the girl, and, having overheard the lovers making a tryst, he waited for her in the cave and saw to it that her

lover did not come. When the maid found the Baron waiting she knew what to expect, but preferring death to dishonour told him that she was the possessor of magic powers.

" You cannot touch me," she cried, " for I am a spirit. Draw your sword and try. Before my flesh the blade will turn ! "

Fearless, she bared her neck to him. The Baron, manlike, was irritated at being dared, drew his great sword and did as he was bidden . . . and found how splendidly the little maid had lied.

Another of the Tridon barons was once bested by a Prince of Sigulda, who was in love with the daughter of the Count of Cremon. He was young and she loved him, but her father favoured his old friend the Baron of Tridon, with whom he was wont to play chess. Thinking he could put an end to the inconvenient suitor's aspirations he promised his consent if the Prince could cross the Gauja river below Sigulda Castle " without oar or sail."

" If you are of a mind to accept my condition," said the old man, " fly your flag from your tower seven days hence. If not, then be content to seek a wife elsewhere."

Love apparently sharpened the young Prince's wits. On the day appointed his flag was fluttering above the battlements of Sigulda and the whole countryside assembled on the river banks to see how he would cross the swiftly flowing river without oar or sail.

The Prince proved equal to the occasion. For having fixed a rope across the river on the previous day, he had nothing more to do than to attach his boat to it with a pulley and to let himself be carried across by the current. That, they say, was the origin of the Sigulda Ferry, which is in action to this day.

As we sat and talked that sunny morning on the roof of the tower, the Prince told me that everything his family possessed in Latvia had been taken by the Government—the castle, the outbuildings and nearly ten thousand acres. The only compensation offered was one hundred and fifty acres which did not include the " centre " of the estate. This, he said, it would not pay him to work and he would have to sell.

His furniture he had been obliged to move to Russia on the approach of the German troops, but that, long since, had been seized by the Bolsheviks. So he had nothing left.

Yet, as I say, he did not whine. To me he seemed extraordinarily tolerant and displayed a fatalism that was almost oriental. He recognized, he said, the necessity of Agrarian Reform to stem the tide of Bolshevism, and all that he had ever asked was that he might be allowed to keep the home of his fathers and be given some compensation for the property that had been divided amongst the landless Letts.

§ 5

The general question of compensation for expropriated landowners is still under consideration, but it is unlikely that the claims of those who gave their support to Bermondt (as, for instance, Prince Krapotkin's father is said to have done) will meet with much sympathy from the Lettish Government. Many of those who have been offered the "centre" of one of their estates have declined, partly because they still hope to get back the whole of their previous possessions and partly because, being now impoverished, they cannot afford to keep up the great houses with the income derived from a few acres. Some of them have appealed to Germany, who, however, has refused to interfere in Latvia's internal affairs.

In the meantime many of these representatives of the old nobility live on in the country as best they can. Naturally enough, they harbour bitter feelings towards the Government and they would form a dangerous element if Latvia were attacked, for undoubtedly they would act as best suited their ends, and they would have with them the small farmer class of German-Balts, descendants of German settlers invited as colonists to Latvia by Peter the Great, many of whom, although they defended their lands with the Letts against the Bolshevik invasion, have since been dispossessed.

It seemed to me that the new State would do well to conciliate this element with German tendencies, which amounts to some 10 per cent of the population. For after

all, although the structure of Latvia was shattered by the war, its foundations remain and the Letts are building on them : and it must be remembered that the men who laid those foundations, whose enterprise made Riga one of the first ports of Eastern Europe, were the German-Balts.

One may recognize the necessity for agrarian reform, but there seemed to me throughout the Baltic States rather a gloating " now we have got you down " attitude towards the old nobility. The Letts claim the sympathy of the civilized world for their past suffering, but they weaken that claim if they show themselves as oppressors of any section of the community once they have obtained the upper hand. True, it is natural enough that they should want to get a little of their own back, but having obtained all she wants Latvia can afford to be magnanimous to her former oppressors. She will gain nothing but credit from such a course. The world is watching her and it behoves her to act with dignity.*

In the meantime the State, having recovered possession of the land, now gives a grant to any would-be settler who asks for it, provided that he can produce evidence that he has a horse and cart and a cow, or the equivalent in cash. He is given timber to build his house and may also obtain a loan from the Agrarian Bank.

Mr. Kalning admitted to me that he considered this policy of State loans bad finance, but declared that there was no other way to get the farmers started. He also admitted that many of the new owners have not yet the resources to bring the whole of their allotments under cultivation and that in consequence much land was lying idle. At first this is inevitable, and it is an encouraging sign that the use of artificial manures is increasing and that more agricultural machinery, especially tractors, is being used. The bigger farmers buy their own, while the new settlers obtain them, when required, from co-operative societies. The country has benefited by a loan of 10,000,000 lats granted by the Swedish Government for the purchase of agricultural implements and machinery in Sweden, though, as Mr. Kalning

* The case of the German-Balts has been set out by Baron Heyking in *The Main Issues confronting the Minorities of Latvia and Eesti.*

observed, what Latvia really wants is an unconditional loan that does not compel her to buy in a forced market.

Whereas before the war the farm land of Latvia was held by two thousand owners, it is now held by two hundred thousand. Even so, there is no shortage of agricultural labour, since many of the great army of industrial workers are glad enough to labour on the land while so many factories are still closed. Moreover, in spite of the land hunger, not every Lettish peasant wants to set up as a farmer on a small scale ; many prefer employment and an assured living on a farm, where they work nine hours a day, to the hard struggle of winning a living from the land and a life of incessant toil.

In the early days of the young Republic the Government had many criticisms of its policy of giving away land to the destitute. Nevertheless, that policy has justified itself. The whole countryside of Latvia proclaims its success. Devastated plains are being transformed into fertile fields again, and to-day there is almost as much land under the plough as in 1913. Everywhere one goes one sees new farm houses, in every stage of construction, and fields that are being brought under cultivation again. I had seen for myself these results in Courland and in Latgalia, where the peasants are more accustomed to live in villages and hold land in common, as in Lithuania. And thanks once more to the kind offices of the good Toupine I was able to see them in Livonia too.

§ 6

Toupine knew one of the great secrets of successful journalism : he had many friends. One of these was a Mr. Richter, the owner of several prosperous dairies, who volunteered to show me something of the new conditions in Livonia himself.

We set off at six one morning from Riga, Richter, Toupine, de Lara (an expert in dairy machinery) and I, along that great trunk road that leads to Petrograd, three hundred miles away. Even compared with the roads of France and Flanders it is incredibly straight, for it is said that Peter the Great, desiring to have a main road from the capital

to the Russo-German frontier, took a map and, drawing a straight line from St. Petersburg to Tilsit, said, "That is where I want my road," and his wishes were almost literally carried out. In the past it has been an excellent road, but little or nothing has been done to it since the war, the policy being that it is hardly worth while to repair it since there is little motor traffic in Latvia and that it is good enough for the country carts, some of which are similar to the Lithuanian model, though shorter, while others consist of a long plank on springs, rather like a low and elongated Irish jaunting-car.

Our first call was on a friend of Richter's, Latvia's most distinguished tenor, who had been given an allotment from one of the large estates—a small house and part of the former owner's garden and orchard, with a nice stretch of woodland. Madame was a great wine-maker, and on the veranda stood great bottles of currant, peach and cherry wine all gugging methodically as they fermented. We were given home-made grape wine to drink and then milk—a combination which was a better mixture than it sounds.

I found this small property an interesting example of the new regime, which caters not only for the peasant but also for the artist. It gave the tenor a home and a part-time occupation, by means of which he can add to his slender income, though unfortunately he is too far from a market to make much use of the grapes and peaches that the fine glass-houses of the former owner give him.

Parting from the tenor, we pushed on and stopped to look at a new power station in the midst of the woods. There is plenty of water power available in Latvia, but even so it struck me as extraordinary that so many country places should be served with electric light, when one considers how many villages and even small towns in England are still without it. But then in Latvia they do not have to compete with District or Urban Councillors who own shares in the local gas-works, as we do at home.

Leaving the car, we walked up a hill where a little clearing had been made, the tree stumps still standing like pins on a bagatelle board. It reminded me of the beginnings of an

Eastern rubber estate. The hill, it appeared, had been cleared of timber by the Government—most barbarously, for no shade trees had been left—before the land was made over to its new owner. Him we found in a tiny log cabin beside the clearing, a fine type of Lett, over six foot, well-knit and bronzed. What interested me most about him were his long thin fingers.

" He is not a farmer—with those hands ? " I whispered to Toupine.

" No," said Toupine, " he is not a farmer by trade. He is a pianist."

It appeared that he had been teaching music for fifteen years before the war and was now engaged by a school not far away, where he earned £15 a month. But, like the tenor, he wanted a stake in his country and had been given his allotment, fifty acres, a short time before and was now busy harvesting his first crop of rye, which he had had to plant on the hillside amidst the tree stumps because he could not afford the labour to extract them. On the summit of the hill he was building a new house and horses were dragging timber from the forest that surrounded the clearing.

Here he lived with his old mother, giving every hour he could to working his land with those artist's hands of his that before the war had never known what manual labour meant. He looked amazingly happy and his enthusiasm was a very wonderful thing. It explained to me exactly why Latvia is prospering and why the critics of the Government are being daily proved more wrong. Faith may move mountains, but it takes enthusiasm to plough and plant them and build houses on them with one's own hands.

" Two-thirds of my salary," the pianist told me with an engaging frankness, " I put into my land. The other third I make enough to keep my mother and myself. And when my house is finished," he waved his hand gracefully to the wooden skeleton on the hill, " then I shall find myself a wife."

It was by now long after noon and we had still far to go. So we said good-bye to the pianist-farmer (the second strange combination I had met that morning), regained the Ford and

pushed on along the straight road to Rauna, our destination. Little patches of pine trees fringed the road, or expanses of blooming heather, and every now and then we passed one of the great long inns which in the old days were posting-houses between Petrograd and Riga. Toupine pointed out to me how they had stabling on either side of them, for even the nobles' horses could not be housed under the same roof as those of their Lettish serfs.

§ 7

Rauna is a pleasant little village seventy miles from Riga. A brook runs through it and the old church, green steeple rising above white walls, is picturesque. On one hill above the stream rise the ruins of an old baronial castle, on another is the site of a still more ancient Lettish stronghold, where huge boulders were once stored to hurl down the steep slope upon the heads of an approaching enemy.

It was now nearly three, and since I had had nothing to fortify me since our early start but the wine and milk mixture (I found the Letts no less inconsequent about their meals than the Lithuanians) I was looking forward to my lunch. When it came, however, the first course was sour milk, which is always too much for me. Inwardly I reviled myself for not being able to eat it, partly because I was weak with hunger and partly because I could see the disappointment in the face of Richter's sister, who had made us welcome in their home above the dairy. But it was no good. Sour milk is an acquired taste and I have never stayed long enough in any country where it is considered a delicacy to acquire it, and so I made an excellent meal off bread and cheese and fresh milk, while Toupine, who never seemed to get hungry but always proved a magnificent trenchman once he got to work, accounted for my share of the sour variety.

Then our host suggested a rest. Toupine, replete with his own and my share of the sour milk, got down to it on a sofa, while de Lara and I climbed the hill and had a pleasant sleep under the shadow of the castle walls. Soon after five, came dinner—oh ! those erratic Baltic meals, they had all the charm of the unexpected—consisting of sour herrings, a

TYPES OF LETTISH COSTUME

kind of stew with potatoes and cauliflower, more cheese, and tea. Then Miss Richter dressed herself in native costume (it was similar to that worn by Miss Jankus except for a shawl flung over one shoulder like a shepherd's plaid and the predominant note was green instead of red and blue) and allowed me to take her photograph ; after which we set off once more in the Ford for Smiltené, where I was to see the State Dairy School.

The school itself is housed in what was once the chateau of Prince Lieven, formerly one of the wealthiest of the Baltic nobility, who had had all his estates in Latvia confiscated, although, as it is only just to record, he fought bravely in defence of the country, and finally placed himself under the orders of the British Mission.

This school is undoubtedly a model of its kind. Each year forty students—men and girls—are admitted, and the course is for three years, so that the total number undergoing training is one hundred and twenty. The fees are marvellously low, for the students pay only the nominal sum of 25s. a year in tuition fees and £8 for board ; they receive free quarters and fuel. On the other hand, they are selected by competitive examination and have to work very hard, for in the first year they receive no more than thirteen days' holiday in August and no holidays at all in the second and third. I felt that even that Spartan Minister, Mr. Kalning, could not carp at such prodigious industry.

The dairy itself is thoroughly up-to-date and equipped with the latest machinery. It was erected for the Government by de Lara after the Danish system, in an old stable which had been converted for the purpose ; all the floors and walls were tiled and the whole building lighted by electricity. Here the students go through a practical course of butter, and cheese-making. Each brand of cheese has its own expert, and we sampled slices of Backsteins, Edams, Tilsiters, great round flat Goudas and even Cheddars, of which I had fondly supposed that little village in Somerset held the trade secret.

In their first year the students take a general course, both theoretical and practical, and in the second and third

year they are allowed to specialize either in dairy work or in general farming. The school has some four hundred and thirty acres of land for experimental agriculture, as well as live stock. The Director was away, but his wife took us round the barns and stables and cowsheds. I have never known any human being so enthusiastic about pigs as that vivacious lady—not even Mr. Marden in *Mr. Pim Passes By* could compete with her. The pigs, it seemed, were her special charge and they certainly did her credit; and since long practice of visiting the pigs of my friends on Sunday mornings has taught me exactly the kind of thing to say when a new litter is produced for inspection, we got on very well.

It was nearly ten o'clock by the time we reached the college itself where, under what was once Prince Lieven's roof, are now class-rooms and dormitories, but late as it was we found a class of girls still at work. Having distracted them by looking in, nothing would satisfy this enthusiastic lady but that I should go upstairs. Leading the way, she suddenly turned the handle of a door and, having flung it open without ceremony, struck a match and displayed to my embarrassed gaze the forms of three maidens undressing in the dark—they are not allowed the light after ten in case they should stay awake too late.

§ 8

The day we arrived at Rauna I had not had time to see much of Richter's dairy, but I knew all about it in the small hours of the following morning. The milk begins to come in from the country at 4 a.m. in the short Lettish carts, and the din below our bedroom was deafening.

I came down early to have a look round and found business in full swing. The milk was being poured from cans into an iron pan, the quantity registered by a girl (she was on duty, poor thing, from dawn till 9 a.m.) who gave each man a certificate and entered up the amount in her book, after which the milk was poured into the great vats, sterilized and made into butter or cheese. The milk is not marketed in its natural condition owing to the difficulty of

transport, but I noticed that many of the farmers were taking back with them quantities that had been skimmed.

This is the biggest dairy in Latvia, but Richter told me that he had five others in various parts of the country. He is a practical man, a fine example of the type by whose energy Latvia is moving to prosperity. He had studied and worked in Danish dairy farms for many years before the war and was an expert cheese-maker, and besides producing twelve hundredweight of butter every day from the 2550 gallons of milk that came in, he also made cheese : Backstein, Gouda, Tilsiter, Edam and—yes, Cheddar too.

He had been assisted to make a start by a British company operating in Riga, which exports butter and sells dairy machinery, and his business is prospering so well that soon he will be a wealthy man. Already he is the most respected man in Rauna. To me not the least interesting thing about him was that, although prospering, he was content to live in the utmost simplicity, in a few rooms above his dairy with his sister to keep house for him and to do most of the cooking and the work. And in spite of the busy life he led, he could find time to bring me, a complete stranger, out from Riga and to take me all the way back next day, after being up at four o'clock, returning himself the same afternoon.

Since the war corn-growing in Latvia has gradually been giving place to dairy-farming. Four years ago there were only twenty-three dairies in the whole State : now there are over five hundred. A quarter of these are privately owned and the remainder are managed by co-operative societies, and their results are shown by the fact that whereas in 1921 the export of butter had fallen to seventeen tons, in 1924 it was over five thousand—a result that should surely satisfy even the former Minister of Finance.

## CHAPTER X

## SOME LETTISH CHARACTERS

A true democracy—The accessible President—"For them every day is Sunday"—A shrewd critic of the English—The enthusiastic Curator—How the blacksmith's son saved the King's daughter—Pointing a moral without adorning a tale—Chauvinistic Letts—Boundary disputes—A Solomonial judgment—Crossing a frontier unawares—A street divided between two countries—Northern and Southern Lettish types—Uncommunicative peasants—Curiosity dispelled by a spanner—"Nicht Lettland"—Why a *visa* is necessary for leaving Latvia.

§ 1

AT the present time Latvia, in common with Lithuania and Estonia, is a true democracy, perhaps because she has had no time to become anything else. We call ourselves a democratic nation although we have an aristocracy; the United States call themselves one, and they have a plutocracy. But the Baltic States at present have neither, and are still democracies not only in theory but in practice. That is to say, not only is every man supposed to be the equal of every other man, but he is. For Tom (or his Baltic equivalent), although he may hold high office, is the son of a peasant; Dick, although he may be a prospering business man has not yet reached the stage of giving himself airs, and lives as simply as his fellows; while Harry, who has to depend for a living on the little allotment the State has given him, is the equal of both in education.

This aspect of the national life naturally strikes an Englishman more forcibly than an American, and I realized that Latvia was an actual and not a conventional democracy one morning, when rather tentatively, I suggested to Mr. Munter, of the Latvian Foreign Office, that I should feel it a great honour if the President, Mr. Tchakste, would receive me before I left Riga.

Having had a fairly comprehensive experience of "official channels" in one capacity and another, I quite expected that it would be a week before an interview could be arranged, if indeed it were ever arranged at all. But to my surprise Mr. Munter did not even hint at difficulties or delays, but took up the receiver of his telephone and got on to the President's Chief Secretary at once.

"The President goes to the country for a holiday to-morrow," he told me when he had finished speaking, "but if it is convenient to you he will receive you now. I will take you round."

We walked from the Foreign Office to the old Swedish Castle which is now the residence of the President, and the extraordinary thing was that I did not even have to wait, but was presented by the Chief Secretary at once.

I decided immediately that the President was a Great Man. For my experience is that only Great Men receive their callers thus. Small men keep them waiting in an outside office for an hour, and smaller men still send out a clerk to interview them.

Not only was Mr. Tchakste the soul of accessibility, he was the soul of courtesy as well. No man has done more for Latvia than he; like Dr. Basanavicius of Lithuania, for years he worked unceasingly for Latvian liberty, and those kindly eyes of his had something of the look of the eyes of the Grand Old Man of Lithuania, a look of repose that comes only after many storms. About his people he was as enthusiastic as a fond father about his children.

"They work hard and play happily," he said, speaking volubly in French. "For them every day is Sunday—now."

He talked much of Latvia's struggle for independence and told me that she would always look towards my country with feelings of gratitude, since Great Britain had been the first to recognize her independence.

"Yet you English are a strange race," he remarked before I left. "You read much. You travel much. There are few savage races with which you are not familiar and books of exploration in farthest jungles come from your Press almost

every week. But I have always found that you have such a superficial knowledge of the countries of Europe, especially of Eastern Europe, where we live. It is strange to me, for after all, our origin and our mythology is akin to yours: from us you may learn much about yourselves."

§ 2

The President does not occupy the whole of the Old Castle, and one of the institutions housed in the north wing is the Ethnographical Museum, to the Curator of which I was given an introduction by the Latvian Foreign Office, since in August nearly all the museums of Riga are closed to the public.

I found the Curator an enthusiast of everything Lettish: it was obvious that he had no interests in life beyond his treasures. He showed me stone axe-heads of a bygone age; old weapons; cowries that were used as money until the coming of the Teutonic knights; old cloth with the swastika pattern on it, introduced from the East in the twelfth century, when Lithuania was a great empire. He told me the old custom of burying money with the dead, that they might pay their fare on their journey to the Shadowland, just as the departed Greeks took it with them to pay old Charon's toll. He called my attention to the Celtic influence on many place-names in Latvia.* He took me through the rooms where various types of national costume are admirably displayed, and showed how the striped skirts, typical of the north, indicated Finnish influence, and the squared patterns of the south Celtic influence. In the north again the typical pattern is that of starland, in the south of sunland; green is the prevailing colour of Livonia, red of Courland, but the long cloak-like shawls, one of which I had seen Miss Richter wearing, are usual both in north and south, and in the patterns on it the swastika is very noticeable.

On my first visit to the Museum I was rather pressed

* For example, Abava, the name of a river in Courland, may be associated with the Celtic Aber=river-mouth; Madun, Dundaga, towns in Courland, with Celtic dun=town.

for time and occasionally tried to pass on tactfully. But the Curator would have none of that.

"*Bitte! bitte!*" he would cry, seizing me by the lapels of my coat and then displaying some fresh treasure, pouring forth a torrent of explanation. When I came to sign the Museum book and saw how few visitors seemed to come, I realized why the old gentleman was so loath to let me go.

But I visited him more than once and he was a mine of information about Lettish folklore. One of the most typical stories he told me was of how the blacksmith's son saved the King's daughter who had been stolen by an ogre.

A certain smith's mare once ate some fish scales and a few days later gave birth to a colt. As soon as it was old enough, the smith decided to sell the colt, but the morning he was about to take it to market he discovered to his amazement that it had changed into a fine healthy boy. The smith and his wife resolved to adopt the child, who grew up faster than a mortal boy and soon showed incredible strength, and it was not long before he could handle the anvil better than the smith himself.

At length the boy, who had been called Janis, told his foster-parent that he must go out into the world, but before he set off he made himself a great staff of iron in the forge. To test its strength he flung it into the air and let it fall upon his outstretched finger, when it broke in two. Three staves he made and broke thus. Only the fourth stood the test, and taking that in his hand the young man set off to seek his fortune.

The first person he met on the road was a giant, who was amusing himself by pulling trees up by the roots. The giant began to jeer at Janis because he was so small, whereupon Janis seized one of the uprooted trees and thrust it into the earth until only the top was visible.

The giant was impressed by this display and suggested that they should travel on together. Janis agreed. They had not walked far when they reached a great plain where they found a young giantess playing tricks with the windmills. Putting her finger on one nostril, she would breathe through

the other and create such a wind that all the sails started to turn. Then she would breathe through the first nostril and make the sails reverse.

" I can beat that," declared Janis, and he blew hard through both nostrils at the same time and caused such a gale that all the sails were whirled off the mills.

" You are too strong for us," admitted the giant. " We are no companions for such as you. You must go on your way alone."

So Janis marched on by himself, until he came to a mountain with a little house nestling at the foot. The owner of this house was a dwarf, who gave Janis food and a night's lodging.

" Birds that have come from the east tell me you are the strongest man in the world," he said to Janis, next morning. " Therefore I ask your help."

He took the young man up the mountain and showed him a great crater that yawned upon the summit.

" This is the spot where a castle once stood," said the dwarf, " but an ogre who lives inside the mountain put his hand out one day and pulled it into the earth ; with it went a treasure that I want you to get back for me."

" I am ready," said Janis.

The dwarf then produced a long rope, and, putting it round the young man's waist, let him down into the crater. So deep was the crater that Janis saw the sun pass three times overhead before he reached the bottom. Once his feet touched the ground, however, he beheld the castle. It seemed deserted and its great gates were closed. But they gave way at a touch from his finger, and so did the castle door : and then Janis wandered through the rooms and halls. Endlessly he wandered, so vast was the castle in extent, without seeing a living soul, until his hair had three times become grey, fallen out and grown again.

But at last he came to a room where a beautiful girl was sitting. Very naturally he fell in love with her at first sight (she was the first female he had seen for a couple of centuries) and with the confidence that fair maidens always give (in fairy-tales) to young men they have met for the first time,

she told him the story of her life—how she was the daughter of the King of the castle, and how the ogre had pulled the castle into the mountain, turned her father into a dwarf and forced her to be his wife.

" My father has sent many young men down here to rescue me," she told Janis rather alarmingly, " but not one has escaped alive. Hark ! The ogre is coming now. You must hide."

She opened a chest into which Janis climbed just as the ogre came in clamouring for his supper, as hungry husbands will.

Now the ogre, living a strenuous life as he did, and continually receiving inconvenient visits from impetuous young men, kept handy two barrels of magic water : one which apparently contained the properties of Phospherine and Virol combined, and the other a kind of bromide which had a relaxing effect on his visitors and so rendered them easy to polish off. But the Princess changed the ogre's supper-water (the wonder is that she had not thought of it before) with the result that Janis, emerging from the chest, despatched him without difficulty. Then the Princess took a magic ring from the ogre's finger and gave it to Janis. At the same moment the castle was restored to its site on the top of the mountain and the King, now in his proper form again, welcomed his daughter and as fathers of beautiful maidens always do (in fairy-tales) gave her to her rescuer as his bride.

Now the most interesting part about this story is the interpretation given me by the Curator. He put its age at about five hundred years and suggested that it might be explained either allegorically or historically. The allegorical explanation is that the Princess represents the sun, the giver of life, the ogre darkness and winter, while Janis is the spring who rescues the sun from the clutches of winter. Historically, on the other hand, Janis is the Latvian nation, the giants Russia and Germany ; and because (as my old friend insisted) Lettish culture is stronger than that of her neighbours, the giants let Janis go on his way alone. Then

the Princess is the liberty of the country, held in durance by the ogre, who represents Latvia's enemies, and the castle is Latvian culture, which may be suppressed but will rise again through the strength of the people.

It is an ingenious explanation and, as it pleased the Curator, I did not argue about it or care to suggest that the tale might be as old as the Latvian plains and have been told before the Letts had ever heard of the Teutonic knights. In itself the story is reminiscent of many Russian fairy-tales (though my old friend would not allow that Lettish folklore had any outside influences), but a Russian friend has pointed out to me that in Russian folklore the Princess would not have secured the ogre's downfall by a trick, and that Janis would have done battle with him in the open : thus a great nation (said my friend) fights its battles, whereas an enslaved people has to gain its victories by more subtle means. Anyhow, those who deserved to lived happily ever after : that is all that really matters in a fairy-tale and so perhaps it is best to let it go at that.

§ 3

It is, as I have said before, natural enough that the Letts, in common with the people of the other Baltic States, should be chauvinistic at the present time. This, after all, is a healthy sign, though the tendency, when carried too far, becomes absurd, for though it may be natural for ill-educated domestics to claim Wagner as a Lettish composer or for the wives of officials to claim the remains of Sigulda Castle as historic Lettish ruins, it is unreasonable that scientific men such as the Curator should claim Latvian culture as a thing uninfluenced by other nations, as if any culture, however strong its individuality, could be that.

The danger of this intense feeling became apparent when the time came for the boundaries to be established between the new Baltic States. Lithuania's aspirations towards Vilna have been described, but similar situations arose between Lithuania and Latvia, and between Latvia and Estonia over their boundaries, though they were sensible enough to allow their difficulties to be settled by arbitration.

VALK
The Latvian-Estonian Frontier runs through this street

TARTU UNIVERSITY

Before the war the only frontier between Latvia and Lithuania had been the boundary between the Russian provinces of Courland and Kovno, and on the establishment of the new Republics this line was not satisfactory to Lithuania, since it shut her off from the sea and also from the town of Daugavpils which she claimed on the grounds that the majority of the population was Lithuanian and that it had been freed from the Bolsheviks by Lithuanian troops.

Professor J. Y. Simpson, who undertook the thorny task of arbitration, finally awarded a strip of the Courland coast to Lithuania, in order to give her the seaboard she needed (the question of the Klaipeda Territory being still unsettled) and to balance this concession gave Daugavpils to the Letts.

The boundary question between Latvia and Estonia was even more difficult, since both Republics claimed the town of Valk,* a railway centre of some importance, on historical, ethnographical and economic grounds. Various attempts to settle the dispute failed, and finally the two Governments appealed to Great Britain, who, to avert further friction, allowed Colonel S. G. Tallents, C.B.E., of the British Political Mission, to arbitrate.

Both States had come to desire Valk as passionately as Lithuania desires Vilna, so that Colonel Tallents had a most difficult task and a very thankless one, since one side at least was bound to be dissatisfied with his award. He very sensibly succeeded in dissatisfying both sides equally, and gave the Solomonial judgment that the northern half of the town should go to Estonia, the southern to Latvia.

Estate agents always say that they are pretty certain they have made a fair settlement if both parties to the lease of a furnished house cavil at the amount awarded for "dilapidations" at the end of the term, and it is equally certain that Colonel Tallents' decision was the most equitable one that could have been made in the circumstances. It leaves a state of affairs, however, which is almost Gilbertian, for the frontier runs through a narrow street, the

* Lettish=Valka; Estonian=Valga.

houses on one side of which are in Estonia and those on the other in Latvia. There is a story that in one place this frontier even bisects a house, in so exact a manner that when the owner of it goes to bed his feet are in one country and his head in the other. Considerable bickering arose as to where he should pay his taxes. The Letts claimed that, since his head rested in Latvia when he was asleep, he should pay taxes in Latvia; to which the gentleman (whose sympathies were Estonian) responded by turning his bed round, so that his pillow would be in Estonia.

When I visited Valk, the barbed-wire entanglement which had previously marked the boundary had been taken down, but I was told at an inn on the Latvian side that special police permission was necessary to cross the dividing street, that the penalty for going without a permit was a fine or one day's imprisonment, and that the sentries would stop me if I tried to pass.

As I believe in conforming to the regulations (however tedious) of a country in which I am a visitor, I set off to find the police station. I had walked some distance through the rather uninteresting town and was just beginning to think that the police station was a long way when, looking up to see what street I was in, I saw the strange word *tän* instead of the familiar Lettish *iela*—street.

It seemed that I was in Estonia.

To make sure I went into a shop and bought some chocolate. The Latvian money I tendered in payment was refused. This was Estonia, the good lady said uncompromisingly, and in Estonia one paid in Estonian marks. No, she could not change my lat. I could either pay for the chocolate in the proper currency or give it back.

Fortunately I had obtained some Estonian money before leaving Riga (I had to go to five different banks before I could get it) so I was able to pay.

Then came the question of how to get back to Latvia. After what I had been told, it seemed highly probable that I might shortly find myself lodged in an Estonian (or a Lettish) gaol. The prospect of either was unpleasant. I retraced my footsteps until I saw ahead of me a sentry-box.

There seemed no sign of life about it, so I sauntered by, and glancing in as I passed saw that it was empty. Standing in the middle of the cobbled roadway, with one foot in Latvia and the other in Estonia, I took a photograph of that crooked street, and then hurried on, keeping to the Latvian pavement.

§ 4

The Estonians have undoubtedly got the best part of Valk, while the Letts have to be content with the fag-end. This probably accounts as much as anything else for the rather bitter feeling between the two sections of the inhabitants. One of the main grievances of the Letts is that those who had property in what is now Estonia Valk have had to become Estonian citizens in order to retain it.*

The male population of Lettish Valk seem to drown their cares in vodka. The number of "drunks" I met during my stay in the town was quite extraordinary, though some of them were certainly Russian. In the course of an evening stroll, for instance, I met only one man who appeared really sober and he was probably on his way to get inebriated at the nearest inn.

There seemed to me a marked difference between the inhabitants of northern and southern Latvia, both in facial and personal characteristics. The long thin type of face that one meets with in Courland seems to go with a progressive temperament, while the northern type, which displays the round face and high cheek-bones of the Mongolian, is more conservative. The people I met on the Livonian farms seemed dour and suspicious. Although most of them speak Russian, and many of them German too, they usually refused to converse in anything but Lettish and were uncommunicative at that.

It is foolish and unjust to generalize, and I speak of them only as I found them. Nor do I blame them, for they may have good cause to be suspicious of foreigners and

* This feeling is, however, disappearing. After the suppression of the Communist rising in Tallinn (December, 1924) the inhabitants of Lettish Valk visited those in Estonian Valk in large numbers to offer their congratulations.

perhaps they have been through so much that they have forgotten to be gay. Nevertheless, I did not find anywhere in Latvia that the peasants were quite so friendly and so smiling as those in Lithuania, although only one showed me any hostility.

This was a Lett my friend Chapman and I encountered in a little shop near the mouth of the Gauja river. We had stopped for a glass of beer and while we were drinking it a villainous-looking fellow came in: an enormous man, with eyebrows like black-beetles and hands the size of hams. After eyeing us malevolently for a while he began to speak to us in Lettish. His tone was offensive, but one of the few advantages of not being able to speak a foreign language is that no one can pick a quarrel with you in it, and since his remarks were lost upon us, we shrugged our shoulders and went on with our beer.

He then began in German, demanding to know where we had been and where we were going. Since he appeared to be neither a journalist nor a police officer, we decided that it was none of his business—and told him so, firmly but quite gently, since although he was not drunk he had as they say in Ireland "drink taken." He then declared that if we refused to tell him he would not let us go, shouldered past us as we made for the door, and planted himself, glowering, in front of the car.

This was more than we could stand. Chapman dived his hand under the back seat and produced an enormous spanner which he brandished in the air like a war club and then started up the engine. The Lett's curiosity seemed to subside. He removed himself and we drove off. But we had barely gone fifty yards when Chapman found that, in the excitement of the moment, he had left his gloves in the shop. The car was backed and I nipped out and fetched them. The Lett had disappeared. As Chapman succinctly observed, he probably thought we had come back to "start something."

Far be it from me to suggest that a foreigner off the beaten track in Latvia may expect such treatment generally: it was merely an incident and when travelling one learns to take the fat with the lean. But in lands where usually

the mere fact that one is British or American is a sufficient passport to a friendly reception, it is perhaps well to show that there can be another side.

I did, however, have an encounter with one other unpleasant Lett and that was the last one I met in Latvia. This was the police officer who demanded my passport as I boarded the train that was to take me from Valk to Estonia one Sunday afternoon. He took the passport superciliously and the *laissez passer* from the Latvian Legation seemed to leave him cold. He departed with it in his hand and returned ten minutes later, full of life and expostulating that I had no Lettish *visa*. I found it for him amidst the conglomeration of "chops" with which the passport was decorated, but he would have none of it.

"*Nicht Lettland! nicht Lettland!*" he repeated emphatically, holding the thing firmly in his two hands.

By this time the train was about to start. My suit-cases were aboard and I knew that it would go ill with both them and me if we got separated. Moreover, the chap annoyed me.

Calling two of his uniformed colleagues, I tried to show him that my passport was in order. But he was adamant.

"*Nicht Lettland!*" he croaked once more.

He reminded me of Poe's raven. I began to loathe him as Poe came to loathe that monotonous bird. I gathered that for my sins I had met the one illiterate in Latvia. The engine whistled and a spasmodic convulsion shook the train.

I became desperate. I banged the *visa* with my open hand. I banged the *laissez passer*. I banged the letter given me by the Latvian Foreign Office that requested all and sundry to speed me on my way. I told him that he was insulting a British passport and the *visa* of his own Legation. I shouted at him.

The effect was magical. He disappeared with the passport. I thought he had probably gone to call someone to arrest me. Then one of his colleagues (who had done nothing to help) tried to soothe me by suggesting that I had better get into the train. I climbed up to my carriage and as the train was steaming out of Valk yet another officer handed

me up my passport—upon which the police authorities of Valk had duly made their mark.

It was not until some time later, when relating this incident to the British Consul at Tallinn that I discovered what all the fuss had been about. It appears that not only must one have a *visa* to enter Latvia but one to leave it. The Government has found it necessary to make this regulation because so many foreigners have departed unobtrusively from Latvia leaving large unpaid bills behind them.

" It was lucky for you it was a British passport," said the Consul. " Foreigners get lifted off that train every week."

So I was wrong and old *Nicht Lettland* was right. That is the other side of that story.

## CHAPTER XI

## THE OXFORD OF THE BALTIC STATES

The "open sesame" of the Baltic States—Estonian geography—A land of lakes—Cheap railway travel—Tartu, the city of learning—White-washing Gothic ruins—The University—Serious-minded undergraduates—Inexpensive education in the Baltic States—Primary and Secondary Schools—The passionate desire to learn—English the foremost modern language—National Museum—How Estonian folklore was collected—Its debt to other races—What we may learn from it—The Estonian version of King John and the Abbot of Canterbury.

### § 1

THE traveller who leaves Lettish Valk for Estonian has a choice of evils: he may take either a train at three in the morning or one at two in the afternoon. If he catches the latter, as I did, he finds himself in Estonian Valk after a few minutes' run, and must then cool his heels till nine o'clock until a train comes from the south to take him farther.

However, the Estonian Customs officers on the frontier were polite and courteous and examined my baggage without making me remove it from the carriage. Having arrived at Estonian Valk station I made my way to the Refreshment Room and had just secured some food when an official came along to announce that it was closing time. I pretended not to understand and went on eating as fast as I could. He persisted and finally I uttered that "open sesame" of the Baltic States, which had so often stood me in good stead.

"English," I said simply.

"Ah! Englander!" he cried, as if that explained everything, and left me to finish my cold chicken and beer in peace. Whether this was due to excessive Anglophilism or whether it was just that he knew all English were congenital idiots and impossible to handle, I did not discover, but

anyhow I remained undisturbed while everyone else in the place was hounded out, and the incredibly stout lady who was in charge even offered to lock me in so that I could sleep on one of the long seats until the room was opened again at six o'clock. This offer I gracefully declined, and wandering to the outskirts of the little town lay on a grassy hill under the shade of a great willow tree and read Conrad's *Gaspar Ruiz* again—I had heard of his death only a day or two before.

Valk almost exactly bisects Estonia's southern boundary which runs east and west with Latvia. On the east, almost at right-angles to the southern boundary, lies the frontier with Soviet Russia, sixty miles of it being formed by the great Lake Peipsi (Peipus); while to the north lies the Gulf of Finland and to the west the tideless Baltic, giving Estonia a seaboard of over seven hundred miles, more than twice that of Latvia. Off these coasts, which are low and sandy in the west but rise to high limestone cliffs in the north, are scattered a hundred islands, the largest of which are Saare (Oesel), Hiiu (Dago) and Muhu (Moon).

In area Estonia, with its twenty thousand square miles, is the smallest of the Baltic States, yet slightly larger than Switzerland and Denmark, and is composed of the former Russian province of Estland and the northern half of Livonia. It has a population of one and a quarter millions, nine out of every ten of whom are Estonians. The correct spelling of the country's name, as accepted by the Royal Geographical Society and adopted by the Government, is without the "h" commonly attributed to it in the British Press.

Estonia is, like Finland, a land of lakes, which indeed occupy one-twentieth of the entire area, while the forests occupy one-fifth. In its general features Estonia resembles Latvia and Lithuania—plains broken towards the east by low undulating hills, on many of which stand the ruins of fortresses and castles, and watered by many rivers, the most important being the Pärnu, which drains central Estonia and flows into the Baltic, the Ema in the east, and the Narova, which rises in Lake Peipsi and flows into the Gulf of Finland, its great rapids generating sufficient power for

he cotton, flax and woollen mills that are situated on its banks at Narva.

Besides the industrial centre of Narva, which lies close to the Russian frontier, the chief towns are Tallinn (Reval), the capital, with a population of nearly one hundred and thirty thousand ; Baltiski (Baltic Port) which is thirty miles west of Tallinn, and is being enlarged to meet the increasing trade ; Haapsalu and Pärnu, both popular seaside resorts, and Tartu,* the ancient seat of learning.

§ 2

I reached Tartu from Valk at midnight and drove to the Grand Hotel, where I procured a large and well-furnished bedroom (the only one I found in the Baltic States equipped with a telephone) for 335 marks—about 3s. 6d. : an English pound note is worth just under 2000 Estonian marks, so that 100 marks may be calculated at being worth 1s. In the Baltic States, where the traveller is continually coming in contact with new and unfamiliar currencies, it is a comfort to be able to work on some such convenient formula.

At this rate of exchange Estonia is far the least expensive of the three States. Living expenses are about a third of what they are in England ; a short cab drive costs no more than 6d., and one may go second-class (there are no first-class carriages on the ordinary trains) from Tartu to Tallinn—a distance of some two hundred miles—for 5s.

The Grand Hotel is a wooden building with a pleasant garden. So long as a visitor does not occupy Room 25 (as I did) he will find the hotel comfortable enough : but of Room 25 let him beware ; it is on the ground floor, close to the porters' hutch, and since the porter and the chambermaids appear to be on duty all night and while away the long hours in conversation just outside one's door, No. 25 is to be avoided. There is no restaurant in the building, but there is a kitchen, and meals can be brought to one's room if desired. Food in the inns of the Baltic States is rather samey and one eats only to live. It is always a problem to know

* Estonian=Tartu, German=Dorpat, Russian=Yurlev.

what to order, but, when in doubt, the safest rule is to call for *schnitzel*—a kind of fillet of beef, with an anchovy and a slice of lemon on it, served with fried potatoes and washed down (yes, even at its best, food in the Baltic States has to be washed down) with a bottle of excellent Estonian light beer, produced in long clear glass bottles—so that you can see the stuff.

Tartu, the oldest settlement in the Baltic States (it is said to have been founded by a Russian Prince Juroslav in 1030 but owed its development to the German-Balts), is a wholly delightful town, and with an atmosphere that is all its own. Its Estonian name means lowland of Tar—Taara being the supreme deity of Estonian mythology, the equivalent of the Scandinavian Tor, and to him, as to the Lithuanian Perkunas, the oak was sacred.

Tartu is the Oxford of the Baltic—and yet utterly unlike Oxford. There is, for instance, nothing noble or inspiring about the University ; it has no semblance of ancient glory, no old grey colleges, for, although it was founded nearly three centuries it has been many times destroyed in war. The main building is rather like the Royal Exchange, but with walls of white plaster and, set as it is in a street with no garden or even trees before it, it has a somewhat cheerless air. Nor has it anything of beauty to show within : it is bare and bleak, mercilessly utilitarian.

Yet, for all that, it is the Alma Mater of Estonians, and one senses the little town to be a home of learning, for in every street one meets men on whose faces learning has set its seal, as well as innumerable students, men and girls, most wearing little caps peaked with patent leather.

Near the University is the students' church, at which attendance is optional, and in the centre of the town is a large square building with shops built all round it, under cover, like those in the Rows at Chester. Here I found hundreds of carts, parked while their owners were at market ; the market itself is held in an open space near the river, the stalls being little hand-barrows. I noticed particularly the large number of flower-stalls, and they seemed an index of two things : the prosperity of the Estonians and their

love of beauty. All peoples, even the most primitive, are attracted by flowers, and in civilized communities they mean as much to the poor as to the rich—perhaps more, since they give an æsthetic pleasure which the rich may obtain in ways impossible for the poor. But the very poor cannot afford to satisfy æsthetic cravings by buying flowers, for they are a luxury, and since I saw many simple folk buying roses and irises and bunches of yellow asters from the Tartu flower-sellers, I knew that at least some measure of prosperity had come to their homes. Five years ago, even three, it was as much as most Estonians could do to find money to buy their daily bread.

Beyond the market ground is the River Ema, fringed by a shady park and spanned by a curious stone bridge erected by Catherine II. Higher up-stream is a temporary pontoon bridge for use while a new one is building. The river flows not into the sea but into Lake Peipsi and brings much timber to Tartu, even from the Russian forests across the lake, to be sent by rail to Tallinn. Steamers ply to and from the lake and great river-boats with vast white sails.

Close to the University, on the opposite side of the street, is the office of *Postimees*, the second largest daily in Estonia, which has been in existence for nearly seventy years. It is the organ of the National Party (not at present in power) which looks hopefully towards our own Liberal Party—since it feels that our Socialists will cede too much to the Bolsheviks and that our Unionists will help the Russian Imperialists, both of whom it counts as dangers to Estonia.

The building in which *Postimees* is housed is the cleanest newspaper office I have ever seen. The circulation of the paper is twenty thousand and it is still printed in German type, since the people have become accustomed to reading Estonian thus; the editor told me that an attempt made recently to change to ordinary Roman type aroused much resentment amongst his readers (the majority of whom are of the conservative farmer class) and one, who had been a "constant reader" for sixty-eight years, protested bitterly, with the result that the innovation was abandoned. The

advertisements, however, are printed in Roman type, as are most of the Estonian books.

The most interesting and most lovely part of Tartu is the Dom, a hill that rises abruptly from the centre of the town, where formerly stood an old Swedish fortress. The Dom is reached by steep paths from all sides and on its summit is a wooded park, which is the property of the University but open to the public. In the Baltic States hills are almost as rare as in Holland, but on the Dom you may stand on the edge of the park and see the whole town, and the flat countryside beyond it, spread out below you. No factory chimneys spoil that glorious view and when you behold it thus you realize that Tartu is above all a city of trees: whichever way you turn your eyes you will see splashes of green amidst the brick and mortar and it would be an interesting task for the Estonian Statistical Bureau (be very sure there is one) to decide whether there are more trees or houses in Tartu.

In the centre of the Dom park is a great sacrificial stone, preserved from the pagan days of sacrificial offerings; you may see the two hollows where the victim's blood was collected by the priests. On the Dom are the hospital and medical clinics of the University, but they are overshadowed by the great red-brick ruin of Tartu Cathedral, built early in the thirteenth century. Much of it was destroyed by fire, but the chancel is still intact and here is housed the famous Tartu Library, which contains one of the finest collections of books in Eastern Europe. I was horrified to see that the arches of the towering Gothic windows were being whitewashed—and the instinct that prompted the whitewashing is that which makes owners of houses (and often public houses) in England that are, as the house agents say, "full of old oak," varnish or paint their noble beams. It is strange how difficult it is for human nature to let well alone.

§ 3

The University was founded by Gustavus Adolphus in 1632, for the enlightenment, ironically enough as events turned out, of the neighbouring districts of Russia, but it

was destroyed with the town in the wars between the Swedes and the Russians, though re-established in 1802, and, when the University at Vilna was closed, it became the only University south of St. Petersburg and east of Moscow.

Yet in spite of the fact that the founding of this seat of learning was a purely altruistic act on the part of the Swedish king, intended to benefit Russians, Germans and Estonians alike, the only remembrance of him in Tartu is the copy of a Swedish portrait lately presented to the University. No statue of that gallant, far-seeing and romantic personality graces the town and it is to be hoped that soon, when there is a little more money in Estonia to spare for such things, some monument will be erected to the memory of the man who gave the first great impulse of learning in the Baltic countries. It was perhaps natural enough that the Russians should not care to commemorate his name; and instead they placed a medallion of Alexander II on the centre of the wooden bridge which spans a dip in the Dom, with the Latin tag *Otium reficit vires* as a welcome to Tartu's place of recreation.

The undergraduates of Tartu are, however, very serious-minded and allow themselves little enough leisure of any kind. They come to the University to work, and do not play many games. A little tennis in the summer, or football in the winter, and occasional dancing are the chief forms of recreation; they are seldom to be seen on the river, but they are keen on winter sports.

The University has some 4500 undergraduates, of whom over 25 per cent are girls. Over three thousand are Estonian, but the remainder form a cosmopolitan community in which Germans, Russians and Jews predominate, though there are also Letts, Lithuanians, Poles, Swedes, Hungarians, Finns, Danes, Czecks, Swiss, French and Dutch amongst them. The majority come to study law, commerce or medicine, but there are also faculties for theology, philosophy, science, veterinary service, agriculture and forestry. The foreigners come mainly for medical training, and this faculty, together with that of philosophy and commerce, contains most of the girl students. The training is entirely

in the hands of male professors, and about half of them are of German origin, a fact which seemed to me a proof of Estonia's liberal-mindedness.

The normal period of residence at the University is four years, but the medical students remain five, and there are two terms in the year, from January to May, and from September to Christmas, so that Tartu's long vacation lasts three and a half months.

The University fees are marvellously low, being no more than 7000 Estonian marks (£3 10s.) a year; though in the medical and chemistry faculties a few more shillings are charged for laboratory expenses. The students are allowed complete freedom, and live where they please; board and lodging cost them about 4000 to 5000 marks a month (£2 to £2 10s.), so that for an Estonian to give his son or daughter a University training he requires about £20 of our money a year and the whole outlay needed to enter the profession of medicine is not much more than £100. Thus higher education is within the reach of all, even though 2000 marks mean more to an Estonian than 20s. do to us. Foreigners pay half as much again in fees and must be able to speak Estonian before they can be admitted; otherwise there is no nationality bar. The Letts, however, pay the same fees as the Estonians and by a reciprocal arrangement the Estonians pay the same fees as the Letts at the University of Riga, while both are allowed the concession of being able to study in their own language.

Tartu approximates more to a Scotch University like St. Andrews than to Oxford or Cambridge, for there are no separate colleges; but the undergraduates form themselves into Students' Associations, the equivalent of our University clubs; members of the smaller associations are drawn from students who come from the same part of the country, or who are in the same faculty, but to the larger ones any member of the University may be elected. The oldest of these is the Estonian Students' Organization, which has a membership of about three hundred. The clubhouse is used for social purposes and meals can be obtained there; another club is the Sakala; this has always been famous for its fencing.

What I found most interesting about both these clubs were ne tablets erected to the memory of the undergraduates who fell in defence of their country during Bolshevik invaion, when these boys (many of them were barely seventeen) eft their books and took up such arms as they could lay heir hands on and helped to keep the Red troops at bay. t is a very glorious page in Estonia's history and the allantry of those youthful heroes is typical of the indomitble spirit of the race. If a new epic bard should arise in Estonia he has to his hand material for a story of great deeds.

§ 4

Before the war Tartu was the only university in the Baltic tates, but as soon as they had declared their independence oth Lithuania and Latvia founded universities of their own. The University of Lithuania is at Kaunas, and, like very other institution there, suffers from shortage of ccommodation, so that a project for adding a third story nd a wing to the present building is under consideration. he fees are even less than at Tartu, being only 100 litas £2) a year and scholarships are provided by the State. Undergraduates maintain themselves, but quarters are proided by the authorities for a nominal sum, and there are ow nearly fifteen hundred in residence.

The University of Riga, a fine building overlooking the anal, was formerly an engineering college, and the regard hich the new Republic had for higher education is shown y the fact that it was converted to its present use within a nonth of the declaration of independence. To-day it is the rgest of the three universities and has five thousand underraduates, one-third of whom are girls. It is international, ut foreigners, with the exception of Estonians, pay at a igher rate ; the normal fees are about 120 lats (nearly £5) year, and the undergraduates find their own quarters and ood. Its faculties include theology, law, medicine, political conomy, engineering, mathematics, natural science and griculture, and it has some three hundred professors—ettish, Russian, German, Swiss, Swedish, French and nglish.

An interesting offshoot of Riga University is the Institute of English which was started four years ago with seventy students and now has over three hundred. It has been designed particularly to prepare teachers for giving instruction in English in the middle schools—they are, for example, *taught* to teach classes of children—and whereas at the University an undergraduate is able to devote only two hours a week to English, at the Institute he obtains sixteen hours' instruction; he usually takes the Institute training as a fifth-year course, but many who are employed in Riga offices also attend.

Mr. Sharpe Wilson, lecturer in English to the University (he was for thirty years Professor of English at the University of Moscow), told me that in the early days after the formation of the Republic there were few who could afford even the low fees of the University without working in some employment as well, and that they would come for lectures from seven to nine in the morning before going to work, so great was the desire for learning and self-improvement. He also told me that English is rapidly outstripping French as the chief modern language, even though the teaching of French is supported by grants from the French Government for propaganda purposes; the British Government has taken no such steps; the wish to learn English has simply come by natural results and without any forced stimulation; so that there is now in Riga an Anglo-Latvian Club (an offshoot of the Institute) which has over one hundred members.

§ 5

This passionate desire for education on the part of the Baltic peoples is a very wonderful thing. Nor is it confined to any one section of the community. Young men and women often make great sacrifices, as I have shown, to secure a University education, but parents are equally anxious that their children should go to school. The three Governments are pursuing a most enlightened policy in this respect, and in spite of the fact that their coffers are by no means overflowing they are making every effort to provide sound

eaching for the children and devote large sums annually
o education : for example, 15 per cent of Lithuania's total
tate expenditure is devoted to this end.

In all three States primary education is compulsory and
ree until a child reaches twelve or fourteen years of age.
n Lithuania, indeed, there is at present no age limit for the
rimary schools, since before the war Lithuania, owing
o lack of educational facilities provided by Russia, was
ne most backward of the three countries, and it is not
ncommon to find pupils, especially girls, of five-and-
venty.

The training in these primary schools includes the teach-
ng of reading and writing in the mother tongue, natural
cience, simple arithmetic, scripture (according to creed),
eography and history, gymnastics (Swedish drill) and arts
nd crafts—sewing, carving and carpentry, and at least one
odern language. It is interesting to note that each of the
ree States has passed a law that English is to be the first
reign language taught in Government Schools.

The national minorities are allowed schools of their own
here they are taught in their own tongue, but they must
so learn the language of the State. Both Lithuania and
atvia have established some two thousand of these
ementary schools, Estonia about fifteen hundred, and the
tention paid to the needs of the national minorities may
e demonstrated by the example given me by the Lettish
inister of Education showing the nationality of pupils in
e primary schools of Latvia :

| | *Schools.* | *Pupils.* |
|---|---|---|
| Latvian . . . | 1,435 | 120,765 |
| German . . . | 78 | 9,519 |
| Russian . . . | 206 | 15,919 |
| White Russian . . | 50 | 2,929 |
| Polish . . . . | 29 | 4,806 |
| Jewish . . . . | 61 | 8,699 |
| Lithuanian . . . | 7 | 909 |
| Estonian . . . | 8 | 321 |
| Total | 1,874 | 163,867 |

As in Lithuania, the primary schools in Latvia and Estonia are closed during the summer months, to enable the children to help their parents on the land.

The secondary schools are also controlled by the State, though attendance is not obligatory; the State provides the buildings and the teachers and the pupils pay a small fee which does not exceed £2 a year. These schools, at which three modern languages are taught, and in some Latin and Greek as well to equip those entering the learned professions, are modelled mainly on the Swedish system; co-education is general, although there are also special schools for girls. There are no class distinctions and the daughter of a Minister may sit beside the son of a drosky driver. In these schools too the rights of the national minorities are respected; for instance in Latvia, out of one hundred and twelve "middle-schools" for general education sixty-seven are Latvian, thirty Russian, eleven German, ten Jewish, three Polish and one Lithuanian.

In addition to these secondary schools there are also technical, commercial, musical, art and agricultural schools as well as teachers' seminaries. Teachers' positions are sought after, and although the salaries, except for the higher grades, do not exceed £4 or £5 a month, the teachers are allowed free quarters and fuel, and since the school usually has a few acres of land they are able to supply a good many of their simple needs themselves.

Many of the village schoolmasters are fine types of men and bring up the whole countryside. In the course of my travels I met several of them and was impressed with their breadth of vision and their passionate enthusiasm for the work they were doing. One in particular I remember. That was the schoolmaster at Rauna, where I stayed on my visit to the dairy-farm. This old man, besides being an enthusiastic schoolmaster was also an enthusiastic bee-keeper, and nothing would satisfy him but that I should take a walk round his hives. Malayan water-buffaloes, though perfectly docile when in charge of a small native boy, often resent (as the Malays say) the smell of a foreigner. It must, I think, have been the same with those bees. Anyhow, for

ome reason, they did resent me, much to my discomfiture nd to the amusement of the rest of the party, not one of whom appeared to have heard of the blue-bag as a homely emedy for stings.

Out of every hundred students that pass through the econdary schools about twenty-five go on to the univer-ities, so that in a few years' time the Baltic States, aving wholly eliminated illiteracy, will have an extra-rdinarily large proportion of very highly educated citizens. n fact a foreigner might wonder whether this cheap and ccessible form of higher education may not in time defeat s own ends by producing a race of students for what are, nd always must be, primarily agricultural countries. Farms the Baltic States certainly pass usually to the eldest son ho has to buy out his brothers : they in their turn are thus rovided with the wherewithal to equip themselves with a ood education. That is well enough. But once their ducation is complete there will be an increasing tendency o seek a living in the towns rather than on the land. Their ture is impossible to foresee, but it is to be hoped that the nd will not suffer from a drain of workers and that this gher education will not breed discontent with the simple fe that was good enough for their fathers. The danger of ver-production is there, it is true, but it is probable that e benefits conferred on a country by having an enlightened opulation will outweigh any such dangers, for, as that wise d far-seeing man, Ringold Kalning, said, the best safe-ard against Bolshevism is sound education.

## § 6

It is fitting that the National Museum of Estonia should situated at Tartu, close to the University. This museum s developed from small beginnings. It was founded in 92 by Dr. Oskar Kallas, the present Estonian Minister London, who, with a small group of students, began to llect ethnographical objects which were brought to Tartu ; time public interest was aroused and material was llected whereby a clear survey of the development of tonian culture could be given. Dr. Kallas continued to

devote himself to his task, but it was only recently that the magnificent collection that he and his fellow-workers had got together could be displayed in anything approaching the manner in which it deserves, when the Government placed at the disposal of the Museum the expropriated chateau of Baron Liphart a mile outside Tartu.

The chateau is a particularly fine one, though one may still see the results of the Bolsheviks' wanton destruction in broken balustrades and shattered statuettes, and stands in the centre of a wooded park overlooking an artificial lake. In this new home is displayed a fine collection (though only part of the whole) of national costumes, weapons, coins, musical instruments and wooden household utensils: particularly interesting are the double wooden spoons formerly used by a bride and bridegroom at marriage feasts, which are identical with the Welsh " love spoons " that used to be made for the same purpose,* and the great wooden beer mugs with lids—the Curator, Dr. Manninen, showed me some that had false bottoms in which peas rattled when the drinker raised the mug to his lips, whereupon the company would gleefully shout out that he had dropped his teeth in his beer.

In another part of the Museum is a collection of sculptures and Estonian and foreign pictures, many of which, I was told, had been presented by the Baron, who now lives in Denmark. This seemed an extraordinarily disinterested act on the part of one who had had his estate confiscated by the Government, and further inquiries elicited the fact that he had " presented " some of his cherished works of art only on the condition that he was allowed to remove the more valuable treasures.

The University of Tartu has wisely established chairs both for international and Estonian folklore and, thanks to a small band of enthusiasts who set to work collecting material before it was too late, Estonia has now one of the finest collections of national folk-songs, legends, magical formulæ and riddles in Europe.

The collection of this material, begun in the first half of

* *Vide* the *Connoisseur*, May, 1922.

PEASANTS OF SAARE ISLAND, ESTONIA

he nineteenth century, was given a great impetus by Dr. acob Hurt, President of the Estonian Literary Union, who n the seventies sent an appeal throughout the country mphasizing the need of preserving the national songs and egends before they were washed away by the oncoming tide f progress.

The very fact that the Estonians as a race had been enied any opportunities of intellectual development and ad been cut off from the culture of Western Europe made hem cling to the songs and the old stories that had been anded down for generations, while since the religion that ad been foisted on them by their conquerors and adminis- ered by priests who did not speak their tongue, meant ttle to them, they clung also to the old pagan beliefs of heir forefathers.

Even as late as 1850 the Estonians were intellectually till a race of children, with all the love that children have or stories of wonder and imagination and all the conservat- sm of children in clinging to the old tales they had come to now by heart. Although it was long in coming, the inevit- ble social change came at last, and with it came the partial estruction of the old national life. As the people learnt o read and write, books took the place of the telling of he fairy-tales that for so long had beguiled the long winter venings; the folk-songs gave way to newspapers or to he modern songs that were taught in the schools. The ation began to grow up. One may see the same process oing on in any nursery to-day as the oft-told tales of ed Riding Hood or the Three Bears have to make way or literature that is closer to the realities of life.

Dr. Kallas has related how in 1888 he, helped by another ndergraduate, collected and wrote down some sixteen housand lines of Estonian songs in the space of six weeks nd says that twenty years later scarcely two thousand ould be collected in the same district.* Then the various ypes of national costumes, of which there were formerly ghty or ninety distinct varieties, began to disappear as the

* *Vide* an address delivered to the Folklore Society on April 18, 1923, nd published in *Folklore*, June, 1923.

products of modern textile factories penetrated the country districts, while for the same reason the old wooden utensils went out as modern " hardware " came in.

So that Hurt's appeal was made none too soon. It met with a ready response, and in all quarters of Estonia school teachers, students and peasants vied with one another to enrich the national collection of folklore. Living amongst the people as they did, they were able to procure more valuable material than many a learned searcher could have done. As time went on, the number of Hurt's fellow-workers amounted to over a thousand, and in this way he was able to collect some forty-five thousand songs, ten thousand fairy-tales and sayings, fifty-two thousand proverbs, forty thousand riddles and sixty thousand superstitions.

Pastor M. J. Eisen, who is now Professor of Estonian Folklore at the Tartu University, and Dr. Kallas did much to supplement this collection, Dr. Kallas being instrumental in getting together fifteen thousand national melodies, and a monumental work giving in detail all the national songs that have been recorded, with all their variations, is shortly to be published by the Estonian Literary Society. In the meantime the collection continues to grow, for even to-day some of the more enthusiastic undergraduates spend their vacations going from village to village to procure fresh material.

§ 7

Nor is this collection to be looked upon as the fruit of an amiable hobby. As Dr. Hurt has well said, it provides an exhaustive and graphic chronicle of Estonian life, written, as it were, by the nation itself. From the songs and folk-tales of a people one may learn much of their history, but much more of their inner life, their joys and sorrows, their loves and hates, their beliefs and aspirations. They are what the papers like to call human documents.

Moreover, they are documents of particular interest to us, since from them we ourselves may learn something of our own history. For Estonian folklore is not a pure thing, untouched by outside influences. No folklore can be that,

in spite of what that kindly old Lettish Curator of the Museum at Riga cares to say.

Fortunately the direction of the study of Estonian folklore is in good hands, for both Professor Eisen and Professor Walter Anderson, a German who is lecturer in folklore to the Tartu University, are men of high scientific attainments and do not allow their vision to be obscured by chauvinistic feelings. Professor Eisen himself admitted to me that the Estonian patriots of the nineteenth century had not scrupled to forge and embellish the texts of inspiring national songs and stories in their zeal.

Estonian folklore owes something to the Finnish, for the Estonians and Finns are of the same racial family, to which the Hungarians also belong (all three are quite distinct from the Lettish-Lithuanian group) and came from the region of the middle Volga to their present home some two thousand years ago. The musical language of the two peoples, which belongs to the Finno-Ugric group, allied to Magyar, is still closely akin, and the innumerable magical formulæ, exorcisms and incantations which have been collected are mainly of Finnish origin. These formulæ are of comparatively recent date, but to-day few people in Estonia know them—for in olden days their secret was jealously guarded, lest their communication should lessen their effect, and the wise women who knew them would usually part with them only when at the point of death.

In the fairy-tales, however, can be traced characteristics that are more generally international, even though they have been given Estonian colouring. Indeed all fairy-tales are rather like a child's painting-book—the outlines are there and each nation fills in the colours for itself. Giants, for example, figure largely in Estonian folklore: sometimes as national heroes themselves, such as Big Toll, the giant of the island of Saare, who is not known on the mainland, or, more often, as the dupe of a national hero, such as Hans, who has a series of encounters with the giant, strategy always prevailing over brute force. But the great national hero is the giant Kalevipoeg. His deeds are the theme of the Estonian epic that owes its existence in its

present form to Dr. Kreutzwald, whose work, *Kaliwipoeg*, was published in Tartu from 1857–61 and consists of a number of Estonian folk-songs, which are in the eight-syllable trochaic line (the metre of Longfellow's *Hiawatha* and a perfect instrument for the relations of a narrative of great deeds) woven together just as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were woven together from the lays of the ancient Greeks.*

In Estonian folklore, too, there are many stories of lakes that move from place to place. In most of such stories the water of the lake is defiled by a woman and the angered spirit of the lake raises itself into the air with the water over which it rules and sails away in the clouds; before descending in another part of the country the spirit commands the peasants who are working in the fields below to flee lest they should be swallowed up by the downpouring water of the lake as it comes to rest in a new home.

Riddles, too, are just as popular as among the Lithuanians. Professor Eisen gave me a book in Estonian containing over four hundred he had collected, of which the following is a typical example:

What is it that, although without life eats like a wolf?—A spoon.

As in Lithuania and Latvia, many of the common superstitions are those found in nearly every country in Europe—for instance, it is considered as unlucky to see a hare cross the road as it is to pass a priest: to show the prevalence of the former belief it is enough to say that it is firmly held by the pagan tribes of Borneo, while the latter is commonly observed in Cornwall, and elsewhere, to this day.

Such parallels one may expect to meet in any country, but I confess that I did not expect to find in Estonia the counterpart of what we always regard as the good old English ballad of *King John and the Abbot of Canterbury:* yet no less than twenty-seven versions of it have been collected. None of these versions is peculiar to Estonia, for the three questions set by the king form the motive of one of the most widespread of Indo-European folk-songs or

* *Kaliwipoeg* has been translated into Russian, French, Hungarian, Finnish and English and is procurable in the "Everyman Series."

ballads. It has been traced to the authorship of a Jew (since even folk-songs must have had authors, though their identity may be veiled in the mists of antiquity) who lived in Egypt in the seventh century, and the first record of it in literature is in the work of an Arabian historian. Since then it has penetrated to almost every country in Europe and has been traced in Syria, Mesopotamia and North America.

Professor Anderson has collected, with that almost incredible industry and research that seems to animate peculiarly the scientists and commentators of his country, no less than six hundred versions of this song, all of which have been minutely tabulated and annotated and are published in a book of 450 pages under the title of *Kaiser und Abt.*

The song reached Estonia from Germany, and the commonest form it takes is the story of a priest who placed above his door the legend: "Here lives a man without sorrow." The King, wishing to punish him for his presumption, bids him answer three questions on pain of death, whereupon, just as in the English ballad the shepherd takes the place of the Abbot, so the shepherd of the Estonian priest takes his master's place, and having answered the questions is raised to high estate.

All the three questions which occur in our ballad are found in Estonian songs:

> "And first, quoth the King, when I'm in this stead,
> With my crown of gold so fair on my head,
> Among all my liege-men so noble of birth,
> Thou must tell me to one penny what I am worth.
>
> "Secondly tell me, without any doubt,
> How soon I may ride the whole world about;
> And at the third question thou must not shrink,
> But tell me here truly what do I think."

The answers given by the Lithuanian shepherd to these questions are the same as those given to the Abbot; I quote the English ballad again:

> "For thirty pence our Saviour was sold
> Among the false Jews, as I have been told:
> And twenty-nine is the worth of thee,
> For I think thou art one penny worser than he."

In order to ride the whole world about the shepherd tells the King :

> " You must rise with the sun, and ride with the same,
> Until the next morning he riseth again ;
> And then your Grace need not make any doubt
> But in twenty-four hours you'll ride it about."

While in answer to the command that he must tell the King's thoughts the shepherd answers :

> " Yea, that shall I do and make your Grace merry ;
> You think I'm the Abbot of Canterbury ;
> But I'm his poor shepherd, as plain you may see,
> That am come to beg pardon for him and for me."

In other Estonian versions the chief variations occur in the second question and answer. Here are a few of them :

Where is the centre of the world ?—You are standing on it, and if you do not believe me you must measure it yourself.

What is the weight of the moon ?—One pound, since the moon has four quarters.

How many stars are there in the sky ?—Two millions, and if you don't believe me you must count them.

How many drops of water are there in the sea ?—It is first necessary to empty it before I can count.

And, as I think, most illuminating of all : What is the depth of the sea ?—A stone's cast.

## § 8

Speaking generally, it is not to their neighbours, the Russians, or the Letts, or the Lithuanians that Estonian folklore owes most, nor to the Swedes, who were once rulers of the country, but to the conquering Germans, most of whom were Saxons, that great racial family which had invaded England long before.

In this way a number of archaic Teutonic ideas are preserved in Estonian folk-lore, many of them long since forgotten by the peoples that passed them on : their progress towards civilization was swifter and in that progress the heritage of their ancestors was forgotten. So that, as

Dr. Kallas has pointed out, in a geological sense the Saxons have deposited an older, and now forgotten, layer of their culture in Estonian folk-lore. Much of our own folk-lore we too owe to the Saxons—how much, it is still difficult to say ; but since by careful comparison it is possible to decide the original source of many Estonian ideas and stories, and to mark out those borrowed from the German tribes, we may still have much to learn of our early history from Estonia.

It is to be hoped that, not content with the publication of those tomes of national songs in Estonian, some scholar will have the industry and zeal to translate an anthology of Estonian folk-lore into English, for, as Dr. Kallas says, " The English, in so far as they are the descendants of the Teutonic race, can never with sufficient thoroughness and accuracy account for their past, particularly that part disclosed by mythology, unless they call in the assistance of our Finnish-Estonian folk-lore."*

* *Folklore*, June, 1923, p. 116.

## CHAPTER XII

## THE CITY OF TOWERS

Tallinn a curious city—Founded by the Danes—Derivation of name—The Castle on the Dom—Danish, Swedish, German and Russian influences—A walk round the old city wall—Its need of preservation—Traditions in stone—Possibilities of the Baltic States for tourists—Why the Baltic States should encourage them—The attraction of the unfamiliar—What the tourist wants—What he will find—The Estonian travel agency—Unsympathetic officials—Some suggestions for the future.

### § 1

ALTHOUGH the countryside of the three Baltic States has a certain sameness that amounts at times almost to monotony, it would be hard to find three European towns more different than Kaunas, Riga and Tallinn (Reval). Kaunas is partly Russian, Riga mainly German. There are scores of towns like Kaunas all over Russia, while Riga, apart from the old quarter, is a European city. But Tallinn is a puzzle. It resembles Pekin in that it is unlike any other city in the world. It is curious, original. It has an individuality that is entirely its own and withal it is a strange medley, for Danes, Swedes, Germans and Russians have all had a hand in its making.

Tallinn has an air of old romance. It is a city of grey towers topped with red tiles; of stone stairs beneath arching gateways; of narrow cobbled streets that wind steeply to the Dom, the rocky eminence on which is perched an ancient castle; it is full of quaint old houses whose peaked roofs look as though they might have been made with a pack of cards, so abruptly do they slant; above them rise lofty slender steeples, pewter-hued; and in the midst of all this are electric trams and modern buildings in the German style.

And ancient Tallinn, like modern Riga, is clean; her

beauties are not assailed by smells as the glories of so many old cities are. Such smells as Tallinn knows are transient, not pervading, smells : you pass them by and are done with them ; and usually they are pleasant smells such as those of baking bread or roasting coffee.

There was a Danish settlement on the present site of the town as far back as 1093, when Eric IV of Denmark, in an attempt to convert the pagan tribes, founded a monastery and built on the rocky hill a fortress that was called by the peasants Taani linn, or Danish castle, whence comes Tallinn, the city's Estonian name. This fortress was pulled down in 1219 by Waldemar II and a new one erected on the old site with a wall, about a mile in circumference, most of which is still standing to-day. From this time the town came to be called Reval, a name which, according to Lady Eastlake,* may be derived from the Danish word *refwell*, a reef, from the peculiar circle of rocks rising abruptly from the deep sand on which the fortress was built.

The Dom church, also built by the Danes, rises with a quiet dignity beside the blatant Russian cathedral with its five gilded domes (it was completed only in 1910) ; in the days of the Russian regime the governor had his residence in the Castle, which was rebuilt in 1772, while members of the nobility lived in houses near by. Most of these buildings have been taken over by the various ministries of the new Republic, one having been allotted to the President, another to the Parliament house, the chamber of the delegates being an original room (newly decorated) with a yellow ceiling, blue walls and yellow chairs with black seats.

My first visit to the castle was in company with Prince Gregor Wolkonsky, the Private Secretary of the Foreign Minister. The Prince (he does not use his title since he is employed by the Republic) comes of a famous Russian family, though he himself is now an Estonian subject. Before the war his father had great estates in the Caucasus and near Tallinn ; he had been dispossessed of the former by the Bolsheviks, of the latter by the Estonians, and now lived in a small house on his former property near Tallinn,

* *A Residence in the Baltic*, i., 285.

the Foreign Minister occupying the chateau. It seemed an extraordinary position, but this slim young man, whose manners were as perfect as his clothes (he was the first person I had seen with gloves in the Baltic States) seemed to accept the position with the same fatalism as Prince Krapotkin ; he was glad enough, he said, to be employed, though life as a married man on £5 a month must be something very different from what he was brought up to expect.

Together we climbed the innumerable winding stairs that lead to the summit of the Castle tower, from which one may obtain a magnificent view of the harbour and the surrounding country. One can trace out the line of the old wall as it runs through what is now the heart of the town, its round watch-towers rising like pepperpots here and there. It was a sunny morning and the Prince was as delighted to be there as I : he had never climbed those stairs before, though he had lived in Tallinn most of his life. It reminded me of how a Londoner will bustle round completely unknown territory, such as the Tower, in a rather harassed attempt to show enthusiastic American guests the sights of the city they expect him to know so well.

Later we drove along a pleasant road that skirts the sea, lunched at a little wooden restaurant in the Forest of Kose, and walked back through Tallinn's park, the Catherine-tal, which was presented to the city by Peter the Great. Here in the great white building that was once a residence of the Governor is installed the Estonian Museum, and not far from it a little lake, formed, as the story goes, by the tears of Linda, the mother of the national hero Kalevipoeg, who wept because she could not carry a great stone that she wished to set up as a memorial to her husband Kalev. And every year it is said the dwarf, who is the guardian of the lake, comes out of the water and asks the passers-by if Tallinn is ready. If you should meet him, your answer must be " No," for if you were to say, " It is ready," the waters of the lake would rise and flood the town.

THE CASTLE, TALLINN

PART OF THE CITY WALL, TALLINN
The spire of St. Olaf's rises in the centre

§ 2

Prince Wolkonsky, I could see, was not particularly interested in Tallinn's architectural treasures, though he was so charming that he would have shown me anything I wanted to see. But in the British Consul-General, Mr. Montgomery Grove, I found one who was more enthusiastic about the grey old city than any Estonian or Russian that I met. He had made Tallinn his hobby. He had studied it. He seemed to know every quaint corner of its streets. It was he who showed me where you may obtain the finest view of the town—I should never have found it for myself, for it is from the courtyard of the Estonian Y.M.C.A. headquarters on the Dom. Here, looking out over a wall that slopes sheer down, you may see in one glorious sweep of vision the steeple of St. Olaf, the oldest of Tallinn's many churches—it is known to have been in existence in 1240 and has been rebuilt in modern times in the pure Gothic style of the original—the curious little tower of the Town Hall, which, now that the Cloth Hall of Ypres is gone, is believed to be the oldest in Europe and had just been painted a ghastly shade of greeny-brown, and beyond it the slender spires of the Church of the Holy Ghost and of St. Bridget, rising above a sea of steeply slanting roofs, whose tiles the inhabitants have lost the art of keeping in position and plaster them on with cement so that they have a curious whitewashed appearance.

It was Mr. Grove, too, who showed me the noble doorway of the House of the Blackheads, whose counterpart I had seen in Riga, and pointed out to me, at the end of a long narrow street, a perfect example of one of the old houses built by the German merchants; on the ground floor was the shop, on the first the living-rooms for the merchant and his family, on the second the store, with just above it a cavity in which once a beam had rested for hauling up the merchandise from below, and above that the tiny window of the room under the eaves where the apprentices lived.

As Mr. Grove showed me, it is still possible to follow the circle of the old wall that once ran round the citadel and

the lower town as well. The citadel itself rises sheer above the moat, part of which still remains, its unruffled water shaded by trees, and it is easy enough to see how impregnable the old grey fortress must have been in mediæval times. In places the wall has disappeared and, as I was horrified to see, more of it is disappearing. One stretch of it had recently been hacked down and a bright red-brick atrocity was going up; in another a cement building, the colour of a Cording waterproof, completely spoilt a corner. Elsewhere parts of the old grey watch-towers have been knocked down (though not so recently) and houses built on to them, while one has been let out as a second-hand furniture shop; I noticed, too, that on the Castle side rubbish is being shot out which, as it accumulates, is gradually obscuring the wall itself. Much that is fine still remains, and some of the old lean-to houses, built up against the wall—there is a whole street of them—are particularly picturesque. Nevertheless, they and the walls themselves are in jeopardy, for apparently no steps are being taken to protect them from the designs of the jerry-builder.

The reason for this indifference is, possibly, that they are not Estonian, and the intensely nationalistic feeling that pervades the Baltic States to-day cares little for anything that is not its own. And to the Estonians, it seems, those ancient monuments are a reminder of their slavery whereas they should be regarded as a splendid heritage, even though set up and bequeathed, unwillingly enough, by their former conquerors.

It is easy enough to understand the removal of the statue of Peter the Great from the main square—as an Estonian lady once said to me, "If the Germans had conquered your country in the past and you had just got it back, would you care to see a statue of a German Emperor in Trafalgar Square?" But with the ancient buildings it is different, and they are entitled to more respect. I have been at some pains to show how zealous the Estonians can be in preserving their own songs and traditions. In Tallinn they have traditions not in songs but in stone: traditions which need no collecting but need only to be preserved. Even if the

Estonians do not feel that they have any part in these ancient walls and buildings themselves, they will do well to remember that beauty is too rare, and old things too precious, to be wantonly destroyed, even in the name of progress.

§ 3

Moreover, even if altruistic considerations do not weigh with the Estonian Government there is another, and more practical, reason why it is for the benefit of the country that Tallinn should be carefully preserved. And that is its attraction for the tourist. So far the Governments of the Baltic States have been too busy setting their countries in order to realize the great potentialities that are held out to them by the English and American tourist traffic. Tourists breed trade. They create markets. They bring money to a country and they leave it there. If they are made welcome and enjoy themselves, they act as perambulating advertisements and send their friends. It is only necessary to consider countries like Switzerland and Japan, which lay themselves out to attract tourists, to see how profitable a source of revenue tourists can be.

Now it is true that the Baltic States have not the natural beauties of Switzerland and Japan. On the other hand, they have one supreme asset—the attraction of the unfamiliar. The English or the American tourist loves something new, he wants to get " off the beaten track." The trouble about the unbeaten track nowadays is that he has to go such a very long way to find it. Yet in the Baltic States there is an unbeaten track that he can reach in thirty-six hours from London—the journey overland to Kaunas is no more—and £12 will take him there ; once he has arrived both living and travelling are cheap. There is much to see in all three countries and in each there is something different ; every day will bring new interests, fresh impressions. There he may see history in the making ; he will not stay long enough for the glories of lakes and pine forests to pall ; he may pass on from place to place by train or motor or river steamer ; from May to September the

climate is warm and sunny and he will find pleasant seaside resorts quite unlike those to which he is accustomed, while if he visits the States early in the year he will have all the joys of sleighing and of winter sports. He may spend a happy week alone exploring Tallinn, and then, if he does not want to go back on his tracks he may either cross the Gulf of Finland by steamer or by aeroplane to Helsingfors, or return by sea from Tallinn, touching at some of the Baltic ports, and so home through the Kiel Canal.

At the same time the Governments of the Baltic States cannot expect the tourist to come unless he is called, and unless something is done to make him at home when he responds. And it is quite possible that seven out of ten tourists who visit the Baltic States in the present conditions would go away disappointed and, by proclaiming that disappointment loudly as soon as they got home, deter others from making the trip.

For the tourist belongs to a pampered class. He is used to countries competing for his custom. He does not appreciate take-it-or-leave-it methods. He is like a lazy salmon that needs a tempting fly thrown over him to make him rise. And to him the memory of an uncomfortable bed, a surly waiter or an uncompromising Customs officer is likely to outlast the memory of any old grey castle wall or any fir tree peaking to the sky and pouring cascades of green above the unruffled water of a little lake. He wants the unbeaten track but, bless his heart, he wants a *wagon-lit* to take him there, a restaurant-car to give him breakfast before he leaves the train and an hotel with modern conveniences to come back to after he has done his bit of exploration.

Now the *wagons-lits* and the restaurant-cars are waiting for him—anyhow on the main lines, and he can expect no more than that. But the hotels of the Baltic States are capable of vast improvement, both in accommodation, food and service, though it would not require a great deal of enterprise to improve them. A good manager and a *maître d'hôtel* of experience in each would work wonders in a short time. Tallinn is better off for hotels than Kaunas, but that

is not saying much, and the Tallinn Petersburg is inferior to the Riga Petrograd (Kaunas ought to start a Leningrad in competition to these two) and the Commerce and the Golden Lion at Tallinn are no better. Every hotel in the Baltic States should have a porter who speaks English and a couple of waiters who at least speak French, for few English tourists and fewer American speak German. That porter, too, should be a man of resource, prepared to do anything for his guests, from advising them how much to pay drosky drivers to recommending them to a reliable dentist.

§ 4

Then each of the three capitals should have some kind of Travel Bureau, preferably in connection with Messrs. Thomas Cook, who at present have no branches in the Baltic States, where the tourist may obtain advice as to trips up-country, have itineraries prepared, hire motors, buy railway and steamer tickets, and see that their passports were in order before they left, so that they might avoid any such encounters as I had with old *Nicht Lettland.* These agencies should prepare " folders " drawing attention to the chief attractions of the country and the means and cost of reaching them : and such folders should be obtainable in agencies of the capitals of Europe and perhaps at the Baltic consulates in foreign countries. In connection with the agencies might be established shops where, through the co-operative society system, passers-by might be able to buy examples of the arts and crafts of the country ; a shop of this description does exist in Tallinn but is not sufficiently advertised, while another that has been started in Riga is tucked away so that no tourist is likely to find it unassisted. One might go further, indeed, and suggest that such shops be opened in London and New York.

There is no such tourist organization at Kaunas or Riga, and although one exists at Tallinn it does not go far enough, mainly concerning itself with booking steamer passages. This is not the fault of the genial Director of the Estonian Travel Agency, which is situated conveniently close to the

Petersburg. I found him both helpful and energetic, prepared to take endless trouble (though all I asked him to do for me was to book an aeroplane passage to Helsingfors and a steamer passage from Helsingsfors to Hull) and he seemed to me in every way just the right man for the job. But he told me he found the Estonian Government " very conservative " ; so far from helping him or encouraging his admirable enterprise, the officials put endless difficulties in his way ; he had been fighting the Railway Department for three years and told me that although foreign railways gave him a commission of 5 per cent on all the tickets he sold the Estonian Railway would allow him nothing. Consequently to defray his own charges he was forced to add the commission to the price of the tickets, with the result that he lost business. This gentleman is an Estonian and he seemed to me to be performing a real service to his country by facilitating travel and by making the way smoother for Estonia's visitors—and already she has many, for numbers cross over from Finland, a country which had learnt the value of attracting tourists to her shores.

The Estonian Government, instead of playing the obstructionist, should do everything in its power to assist the first Travel Agency in the Baltic States. It might do a great deal worse than subsidize it, just as Latvia and Lithuania might do worse than subsidize enterprises that would attract visitors to their countries : each one, for instance, might set aside one or two of the expropriated estates for country hotels with golf courses, tennis courts and good fishing. And if trips down some convenient rapids could be arranged that would be well enough. It should not be difficult to provide something better, for instance, than the rather tame expedition down the Hodzu Rapids in Japan, which nevertheless attracts thousands of tourists every year. The Governments of the Baltic States spend a deal of money on the publication of literature with propaganda intent and they should realize that the best propaganda merchant in the world is the British or American tourist who visits a country and enjoys himself.

Doubtless these things will come in time and, for the

increased prosperity of the new Republics, it is to be hoped that they may come soon. The foregoing suggestions are offered to the Governments of the Baltic States in a spirit of friendliness, not in a spirit of carping at what they have left undone : for no one recognizes better than I that they have had enough to do since their countries became independent without worrying about the needs of tourists.

## CHAPTER XIII

## HOW ESTONIA HAS MADE GOOD

Origin of the Estonians—Racially different from the Letts and Lithuanians—Kinship with the Finns—The coming of the Danes—Waldemar's vision of the Fiery Cross—Estonia sold to the Teutonic Order—The peasants become serfs—Ivan the Terrible attacks the Order—Swedish protection accepted—The Russian conquest—Estonia suffers the fate of Latvia—Gallantry of Estonian soldiers in the war—German occupation—The Bolsheviks attack—A British squadron to the rescue—Estonia cleared of her enemies—The work of reconstruction begins—Narva and its cotton mills—Forests and timber—Peat bogs and oil shale as substitutes for coal—How Estonia has justified the confidence of the Great Powers.

§ 1

SINCE Estonia secured her long desired independence, her Government has had just as much to do as those of its neighbours. Although it cannot be made too clear that the Estonians belong to a totally different family from the Letts and Lithuanians, nevertheless they have passed through the same tribulations, although they were once hereditary enemies.

The Estonians, whose origin can be traced to the middle Volga and Ural valleys, are entirely distinct from the Slavonic-Russians both in racial characteristics, culture and language, but of the same stock as the Finns, probably reached the country they now occupy some time before Christ. Although their kinsmen the Kurs and the Livs, now almost as extinct as the old Prussians, became subject to the Letts,* who, with the Lithuanians, pushed forward from the south in search of an outlet to the sea, the Ests,

* *Vide* Baron A. Heyking, *The Main Issues Confronting the Minorities of Latvia and Eesti*, p. 5. This view seems to have more support than that of Mr. W. F. Reddaway, who states that the Estonians are believed "to have forced their way up the rivers, driving the Letts before them." *The Baltic and Caucasian States*, p. 78.

as they were then called, remained undisturbed for centuries and became noted pirates and sea-rovers, whose combats with the Vikings are often mentioned in the Scandinavian sagas.

The Russian tribes attacked them on the south-east, but penetrated no farther than Tartu and it was not until the beginning of the thirteenth century that they became subject to the Danes. The story goes that Waldemar II, the founder of Tallinn, saw in the heavens a fiery cross which betokened his victory over these pagan tribes and after his vision had been fulfilled he adopted the cross as the national flag of Denmark, just as Achaius, King of the Scots, and Hungus, King of the Picts, having had a vision of St. Andrew's cross before their battle with Athelstane, adopted the cross as their national emblem when they had won the day.

The Danes established themselves on the northern shores of Estonia twenty years after Bishop Albert and the Teutonic knights began to interest themselves in the conquest and conversion of Latvia. For over a century the Danes retained their hold upon the country, although the northern part of Livonia came under the sway of the Teutonic Order. Tallinn came to be of sufficient importance to be quarrelled for by the Swedes and the Swordbearers and even by the Pope himself who, however, seems to have thrown his weight into the scales of Denmark, and, after being taken and held by the Swordbearers for ten years, the town became the seat of a Danish Bishopric in 1240.

After this trade began to flourish and was further encouraged during the regency of the Queen-mother of Denmark, Margaretha, who selected Estonia as her Witwensitz, confirmed and increased the privileges of Tallinn, endowed it with the rights of coinage and enfranchised it from all outside interference. In 1284 the town became a member of the Hanseatic League, but at last, having been bandied about, the fertile province of Estonia, together with its flourishing little capital, was sold in 1347, in order to replenish the coffers of Denmark, to the Teutonic Order, which was by that time in possession of the whole of Livonia

—the northern half of which forms part of the Republic of Estonia to-day.*

Thus the Estonians came under the heel of the Knights by sale rather than by conquest, though that is not to say they did not defend their liberty, for while the Letts were fighting the Swordbearers in the south the Estonians were engaged in a similar conflict with the Danes in the north. But from the day Estonia passed into the hands of the Order her people shared the fate of the Letts and the Knights enriched themselves at the expense of the former owners of the country. So great did the increasing commercial wealth of Tallinn become that the Baltic Barons took to wearing heavy chains of gold and pranced about on horses whose saddle cloths were embroidered with jewels, whilst their ladies sported diamonds and other precious stones in great profusion.

For two hundred years the Estonian peasants remained serfs, their plight becoming more and more unhappy as the years went on. In 1558 Ivan the Terrible, in an attempt to fulfil Russian aspirations and make his country mistress of the Baltic, attacked the Order and captured Narva and Tartu; two years later the peasants rose in immense numbers, attacked castles and monasteries, killing all before them, and finally threw off the Teutonic yoke and accepted the protection of Sweden at the same time as the Letts accepted that of Poland.

As in Latvia, the days of Swedish dominion gave a respite to the peasants and their lot became less hard, although, as the influence of the Hanseatic League declined, so did the prosperity of Tallinn decline also. The country, however, was wrested from the Swedes by Peter the Great with the remainder of the Baltic countries, and from the year 1721 Estonia shared the same fate as Latvia and suffered from the oppression of Russian official and German overlord alike. In the year 1735 Baron Rosen, a highly placed member of the German Baltic nobility, reported to the Russian Government that the peasants belonged body and soul to the landowner; that they themselves had no rights

* *Vide* Lady Eastlake's *A Residence in the Baltic*, i., 287 *et seq.*

of property and that the landowner had unlimited powers of control and taxation of his peasants, while early in the nineteenth century there appeared in a German newspaper the announcement of a Baltic Baron who offered to exchange a strong tall peasant for a good dog.

A brief account of those bitter years has been given already and there is no need to recapitulate the tribulations of the Estonians—to whom their overlords contemptuously referred as the " White Hottentots "—for they were those of the Letts. It is enough to say that, although racially different from their neighbours, they too preserved their individuality, their language and their national consciousness through centuries of oppression. Little by little their lot grew lighter, thanks to the efforts of their own leaders, until the outbreak of the Great War, which, in spite of the improved conditions, found the greater part of the country owned by German landlords yet controlled by Russian bureaucrats, and the peasants conscripts in the army of the Tsar.

§ 2

During the first years of the war Estonia did not fare so ill as her neighbours, though thousands of her sons fell fighting gallantly in the Russian Army ; it is on record that out of three hundred Estonians serving in a Russian regiment no less than ninety-two received the St. George's Cross for valour.* So long as Riga held out, Estonia was safe, but once Riga had fallen the German forces, dammed for two years by those heroic Lettish battalions, overflowed to the north and by the end of February, 1918, the whole of Estonia was occupied.

In the meantime the Estonians, taking advantage of affairs in Russia, had set up a National Council, elected by universal suffrage, with Dr. J. Ramot, and afterwards Konstantin Paets, at its head and on February 24, 1918, the country had been declared an independent democratic Republic. This declaration did not save it from the results of the occupation and the German military authorities

* *The Baltic and Caucasian States*, p. 104.

upheld the right of the German-Balts. The peasants and farmers suffered from wholesale requisitions. Estonian schools were closed, Estonian newspapers and societies were suppressed, the German language became compulsory, and the avowed intention of the conquerors was to transform Estonia, with Latvia and Lithuania, into a German Baltic State.

After the Armistice the German forces withdrew and the Provisional Government, whose brief activities had been brought to an untimely end by the Army of Occupation, again secured control and turned to face the Bolsheviks as best it might. The Bolsheviks, among whose ranks, be it said, was a large sprinkling both of Estonians and Letts, began their advance at the end of November and took the Estonians at a great disadvantage since the division that had been formed previous to the occupation had been disbanded by the Germans and their arms had either been destroyed or taken away. While the Estonians were reorganizing, Narva fell, and by the end of the year Bolshevist troops were menacing Tallinn and had overrun the southern part of the country as far as Tartu, Viljandi and Pärnu.

But the Estonians were not left to fight their battles alone. Their kinsmen the Finns came to the rescue and sent money, arms and a force of volunteers, while Great Britain also assisted them with munitions and despatched to the Gulf of Finland a naval squadron, under Admiral Sinclair, which captured two Russian destroyers; these were presented to Estonia and form her fleet to-day.

The Estonian Army, now grown to one hundred thousand men, took fresh courage and under the leadership of General Laidoner organized a counter-attack on a large scale, which was completely successful. In a month the country was cleared of Bolsheviks. By February 24, 1919, the anniversary of the proclamation of Estonian Independence, there remained no enemy on Estonian soil.

The end, however, was not yet, for the Bolsheviks rallied and attacked the eastern and southern fronts with a force that grew to thirty-five regiments, six of which were Lettish

and four Estonian. But the Estonians and their Finnish allies stood firm, and, although outnumbered and ill armed, not only did they hurl the Bolsheviks back, but rendered the Letts invaluable assistance by helping them to clear Southern Livonia of the Soviet forces and, as we have seen, to deliver Riga from the menace of von der Goltz and his combination of German-Balts and German regulars, who were intent on establishing a German dominion in the Baltic.

Estonia signed a peace treaty with Soviet Russia at Tartu on February 2, 1920, whereby, besides her independent sovereignty being recognized, she was to (and did) receive an indemnity of fifteen million roubles in gold and the right to exploit nearly three million acres of Russian forests, granting on her side free transit to her ports for Russian goods.

The Constituent Assembly was at last at liberty to continue to devote itself to the pressing problems of reconstruction; religious freedom was granted to all—as in Latvia, the majority of the population is Lutheran—the rights of the national minorities were proclaimed and the right of every citizen to receive a certain quantity of land was recognized; and a constitution was drawn up and finally approved by the Assembly, which was then succeeded by a Parliament of one hundred delegates elected by universal suffrage.

Estonia became so ultra-democratic that even though a Republic she would not have a President, but preferred to elect as the head of the State a Premier-President, or "State-Elder"* who, unlike the Presidents of Latvia and Lithuania, changes with the Government. By January 26, 1921, Estonia had so far progressed that the Allied Powers granted her the *de jure* recognition for which she had long pressed and which, owing to her unsettled future, they had withheld. Eighteen months later recognition was also accorded by the United States.

* The Estonian word is Rügivanem, the title held by the chief of each tribe in olden days.

§ 3

Estonia was the first of the Baltic Republics to make peace with Soviet Russia and so was able to set about the task of reconstruction all the sooner. Although she had not suffered so complete a devastation as Latvia, her task was heavy enough; like her neighbours, she needed capital; agricultural conditions were in a sorry state, and many of her factories had been dismantled and destroyed.

Before the war Estonia's greatest industry was the manufacture of textiles, and the chief cotton mill was at Narva, on the banks of the Narova river, whose great falls supplied the power. Narva is only nine miles from the Russian frontier and fortunately its mills and factories escaped the general destruction during the war—partly because a considerable amount of the capital invested in them was Russian and also because until the Revolution they were executing large orders for the Russian Ministry of War. These mills, which were closed for two years, are now running again, and it was to see them that I paid a visit to Narva.

The International Sleeping Car Company no longer runs its *wagons-lits* on the Tallinn-Narva line, but the Estonian Railway provides second-class sleepers for a modest sum. These sleeping compartments contain four berths each, which are allotted "irrespective of sex." On the journey north I was lucky enough to have a compartment to myself, but returning to Tallinn I found a lady and two men occupying the other berths, while a beautiful Finnish lady, who befriended me by acting as my interpreter with the guard, was not altogether pleased that one of the berths in her compartment had also been allotted irrespective of sex.

For all that, these second-class sleepers (the third-class carriages also have berths, for which no extra charge is made, though no linen is provided) are an excellent institution, and our railway companies would do well to provide similar facilities on some of the long runs, such as to Scotland or the West of England, and so enable passengers who cannot

NARVA
Swedish Castle on left bank, Russian Fortress on right

afford the expense of a first-class sleeper to travel in more comfort than they can at present.

On a sunny morning one of the loveliest and most impressive sights in the Baltic States is the great fortress of Narva rising grey and sheer and unscaleable above the racing waters of the river as they come swirling from the great falls above. The town is spread on both sides of the river, and on the southern side above the bridge rises the Hermann Castle, built by the Swedes. Swedish castle and Russian fortress (connected, it is said, by a subterranean passage that runs beneath the river) form a strange contrast: both are relics of the age that produced them and to-day they stand guarding the river manned by the descendants of the race their founders conquered.

The Ivangorod (as the fortress is called) was built by Ivan the Terrible when he captured Narva, and is now the quarters of the Estonian garrison, which covers Tallinn and protects the frontier. You may spend a pleasant hour walking along its formidable walls and poking into the old watch-towers, above which wireless apparatus looks so strangely out of place; and you may peer through one of the long lean loopholes at the water as it flows swiftly round the bend on which the fort is built, and watch the logs that have just come tossing over the falls drifting down towards the saw-mill below the bridge.

Many get no farther than the bridge and collect on the massive stone buttresses: great logs and small, some unwieldy as motor-buses or hulking as brewers' drays, others with lines as graceful as a Daimler, and short workaday props like Fords and taxi-cabs, all hurried along by the stream. Nose first or broadside on they come until, missing the clear channel between the bridge's piers, their headlong journey from the forest far up-country is arrested and they join those that have been held up before them by the buttress as surely as traffic is held up in Piccadilly by a policeman's white-gloved hand. Greater and greater grows the block, until there are a couple of hundred logs jammed so tightly that not one can move, and then three husky fellows armed with boat-hooks come out to shift them.

You might think it would be a day's work to release that huge mass, but the timbermen know their job. Balancing themselves on the half-submerged logs, they know just which to pull out first : one is released and goes floating on ; then another and another ; suddenly the mass, so long inert, seems to quicken with life ; there is a warning shout and the three men leap for the buttress just as the great mass breaks loose and shoots under the bridge, scattering as it goes.

The falls themselves are a short distance above the bridge and beside them, on either bank of a tributary of the Narova, which with the main stream forms an island, are the buildings of the great Krenholm Cotton Mills, the second largest in the world. The factory was founded seventy years ago by a Russian named Knop, who is said to have been remarkable for his enormous head. This peculiarity may be seen in the statue that stands outside the mills, showing the old gentleman (in his overcoat) bareheaded and grasping in one hand an outsize in bowler hats.

Although the capital of the company is mainly Russian, the mills have always been under British management and the present manager (who comes, as one would expect, from Lancashire) very kindly took me round, showing me the various stages of manufacture from the time the raw cotton enters the mill until it leaves as cloth.

It was sad to see so many of the looms idle, and two whole mills are closed down. Before the war this factory alone employed eleven thousand workers : now there are but two thousand. Seventy-five per cent of these are women, mostly Estonian, who receive 150 marks (1s. 6d.) a day and are given lodging and fuel at a nominal rate. Even with this cheap labour, however, the mill cannot compete with Lancashire.

Before the war Russia was the chief market not only for Estonian's textiles, but for all her industries. After the Bolsheviks came into power and the productivity of Russia declined, great difficulty was found in obtaining the fuel and raw material which Russia had formerly supplied, and connections not only with Russia but with foreign

markets were broken, so that finally all industrial activity was stopped. The Krenholm Mills opened again in 1919, though with a sadly reduced output ; but although Russia has now almost entirely dropped out as a customer, textiles are exported to Germany, Finland and Sweden and a certain amount find a local market.

At the factory belonging to the Narva Cloth Manufactory, Ltd., I found that a similar state of affairs existed. This factory has woollen, flax and jute mills, but the jute mill is closed down, while work in the other two is greatly reduced. The wool is Australian, being bought in Liverpool, Bradford and Amsterdam. The manager told me that although Russia was the chief customer before the war, sales have now ceased altogether, since the Bolsheviks demand three years' credit, and the local market suffers from the demand for English textiles ; the Tallinn merchants import large quantities of manufactured goods to satisfy this demand, and it is said quantities of cloth are exported from Narva to England and are sent back to Estonia with English labels, to be sold as English goods.

The attitude of the Estonian Government towards these great enterprises is that, although anxious to help, its resources are limited, and, as it is, the textile industry is the largest debtor of the Bank of Estonia. At the same time it is not considered sound policy to guarantee the financial schemes of businesses mainly built up on foreign capital, since the Estonians can themselves produce what they need. There are, for instance, now four large cotton mills in the country, whereas one would suffice Estonia's needs and the policy is to foster the small enterprises and leave the large ones to fend for themselves. The long and short of it is that Estonia does not aim at becoming a great industrial country : she wishes to produce what she can to satisfy her own needs and intends to concentrate on building up her agricultural trade, particularly dairy produce. She intends to compete in the European market with her butter and eggs and cheese, rather than with textiles.

§ 4

Nevertheless, Estonia is paying considerable attention to her paper industry which has been the first to adjust itself to the changed economic situation and to the requirements of the new markets. The factories now turn out increasing quantities of wood-pulp, paper, cellulose and vast numbers of paper-bags, cardboard cigarette-holders and cardboard boxes. Thousands of the latter find their way to the neighbourhood of Bond Street and the Brompton Road, where their presence is spreading Estonian fame. I remember a friend of mine, hearing I had just come back from the Baltic, saying, "Ah, yes, Estonia. . . . What a funny thing. That's where my wife's hat-boxes come from."

Timber itself is of course one of the country's greatest assets and there are now over fifty saw-mills in the State, whereas before the war there were but ten. There are also a number of flourishing furniture factories which, besides satisfying local needs, export their products, principally to England, Holland and Belgium. The chief of these is that of A. M. Luther of Tallinn, whose plywood products are well known on the Continent under the trade-mark of Lutherma, and in Great Britain and America under the name of Venesta.

Estonia is now able to supply most of the local requirements for leather goods from her own factories, and also has factories for the manufacture of tobacco, alcohol (considerable quantities of which are smuggled to the dry State of Finland), drugs and dyes, tar, turpentine and pitch, linseed oil and varnish, cosmetics and soap, and matches—of the latter nearly a million boxes are produced annually and, besides satisfying local requirements, leave a surplus for export to the value of over £5000.

Estonian cement, owing to the small proportion of magnesia it contains, is considered the best of its kind in the world, and the output amounts to nearly a million barrels, the chief customers being Finland, Scandinavia and the United States. Lime- and brick-kilns, owing to the increased building activity since the war, are flourishing and

the glass industry, which was mainly in the hands of German managers and German workers before the war, has increased rapidly; the Estonian glass works, besides equalling the pre-war output of glass window-panes, now turn out three million bottles a year, three times the number produced in 1913.

Like Latvia and Lithuania, Estonia has no coal, but she has large areas of peat-bogs, amounting to about three thousand square miles, which mostly lie in the northern and western parts of the country. Formerly this valuable asset was not exploited, and the peat was used only for domestic purposes, since, owing to the abundance of forests, cheap firewood was always available. During the war, however, the coal supply was cut off and large expanses of forests were felled or devastated, so that the bogs began to be exploited on a large scale, and there are now over three hundred peat-cutting plants at work; fuel for many of the factories, the Krenholm Mills for one, is thus supplied and much valuable timber is being saved in consequence.

Estonia is fortunate in being the only one of the three Baltic States in which mineral deposits have been found: these are the oil shale beds which lie in strata along the northern coast from Baltiski to Narva. This shale is very rich in crude oil, yielding over sixty gallons to the ton. It is inflammable and burns like tar with the unforgettable smell of burning rubber, and in a powdered form has proved a useful substitute for coal. It is now being used in factories and on the railways and is also used in the cement factories, where it serves both as fuel and (in the form of ashes) as an ingredient, though its greatest value lies in its by-products which produce gasolene, kerosene, lubricating oil and residual tar. This industry, which is still in its infancy, is likely to be very important when more developed; for example, Sir Philip Dawson, at the recent meeting of the Latvian and Estonian sections of the London Chamber of Commerce, stated that if the total deposits in Estonia could be exploited to their full capacity, the production of oil from them in ten years would be equal to the annual production of oil in the world at the present time. Already the interest shown has

been so great that concessions have been taken for nearly all the territory where deposits have been located. The annual production of shale will soon reach half a million tons.

§ 5

The chief exports of Estonia are cotton and woollen fabrics, timber, paper, flax, potatoes and dairy products, while the chief imports are textiles, coal, agricultural machinery, iron and steel. It is satisfactory to know that Great Britain has now definitely taken the place of Russia as the chief market for sale of the Estonian products, though Estonia's needs are mainly satisfied by Germany.* Over one-third of her exports go to British ports and nearly one-fifth of her imports come from them. England is, in fact, the next largest seller after Germany, followed—at some distance—by Russia, Latvia and the United States, while Germany, Sweden, Finland and Russia together do not buy as much from Estonia as Great Britain.

In common with her neighbours, Estonia is not well served with good metalled roads (and it must be remembered that for four months in the year snow and frost provide universal highways), but she has just under one thousand miles of railway lines, and although she has no great rivers like the Nemunas or the Daugava running through her territory, Lake Peipsi and the Narova provide an outlet by water from Russia.

The port of Tallinn, which although frozen for a few weeks every year is kept open by ice breakers, is linked up with the lines that run through Latvia and Lithuania to Western Europe and also with Russia, and when advantage is taken of the concession granted by the Peace Treaty to construct a direct line from the capital to Moscow, Tallinn will become a still more powerful rival to Riga for Russia's transit trade. Considerable improvements to the harbour have already been carried out by the new Republic, while improvement

* The large imports from Germany in the years after the war were due mainly to the inflation and the consequent low prices. Now Estonia is gradually turning elsewhere, though a large proportion of the imports from Germany consists of goods (such as wheat, rye, sugar, cotton) consigned to Hamburg, Bremen and Stettin for distribution.

schemes for the future include the widening of the Admiralty basin, the building of storehouses, the erection of electric cranes on all the wharves and the continuation of the construction of the new port which was begun by the Russians during the war, so that when completed Tallinn will have a holding capacity of half a million tons of cargo steamers.

All this Estonia has done in the space of five brief years. Like her neighbours Latvia and Lithuania, whose lot she shared, she has made good. Her progress has had setbacks, it is true ; but the wonder is, not that she should have had setbacks but that she should have recovered in the way she has. She has justified the confidence placed in her by the Great Powers who accorded her recognition and the measure of that progress may be gauged by the fact that whereas in 1920 her annual budget showed a deficit of a million sterling now, thanks to her sound fiscal policy, her budget balances.

## CHAPTER XIV

## LANDED PEASANTS

Two hundred families own half Estonia in 1914—Results of Agrarian Reform—A merry flax farmer—Up-to-date methods of agriculture—Farms with telephones and electric light—Estonian-grown coffee—The increase of dairy-farming—Estonian cattle—Best butter for English market—The most primitive people in the Baltic States—A Setu songstress—Sunday school pupils of seventy—Communal villages—A legend of Lake Peipsi—A trip to Viljandi—The height of hospitality—A flax factory—The farmer-politician—Baltic bath-houses.

### § 1

ESTONIA has recognized that the main source of her future wealth must come from agriculture, and after the war her people, having been for seven years a race of soldiers, became once more a race of farmers. With this difference, however: before the war they farmed their country's soil for others; now they farm it for themselves.

In 1914 over half the country was in the hands of two hundred families of German-Balts, while half a million Estonian peasants got their bare living from the land without possessing an acre themselves. This gave the Bolsheviks a convenient battle cry in 1919. Whereas the German Emperor aspired to free the Estonians from the Russian yoke, the Red leaders aspired to free them from the German-Balts. "Why protect the property of your German overlords," they cried, "when you yourselves own nothing? Join our cause, for only by our help can you obtain your land!"

Like a good deal of insidious Bolshevik propaganda, this argument was likely to (and in fact did) appeal to a good many landless peasants, but to save the country the Government of the new Republic proclaimed that the Estonian Army was fighting for its own land, not for that of its

masters, and that all landless peasants would receive an allotment once victory had been attained.

As in Latvia, these promises were kept. By the Agrarian Reform Law the State took over all baronial and feudal estates, together with those belonging to the Church and the former Russian State—in all over one thousand estates with a total area of nearly six million acres. Payment was made for movable property and the question of compensation for the land itself is still " under consideration " ; but it must be noted that the former owners have not usually been allowed to retain the " centre " or any part of their estates, as in Latvia and Lithuania.

About half the expropriated land is forest, which is now under State control, and most of the remainder, arable land and pasture, has been parcelled out into small farms among the landless peasants and the former tenants belonging to the great estates, though some have been reserved for agricultural schools, sanatoriums or other State institutions. So great was the land hunger that even while the debate on the Agrarian Reform Bill was in progress no less than fifty thousand applications for land were sent in, and by the end of 1924 some thirty thousand new farms had been created, with the result that the Communistic movement is making little, if any, headway and Bolshevik propaganda now falls on the unheeding ears of men who have a stake in their country. It would be difficult for us to find better examples of the value of small farm ownership than in the Baltic States.

When allotting these farms the Government gave priority to ex-soldiers and officers who had fought for Estonia's liberty. The land is first leased for six years, to be granted after that period either on hereditary lease or sold as freehold to the occupiers, and, where necessary, the State has provided loans for building and development.

The Government's policy of giving all its citizens equal opportunities of deriving a living from the land naturally had its detractors, just as the similar policy had in Latvia. But, as in Latvia, the policy is justifying itself. Mr. J. Ramot, the first leader of the Constituent Assembly and

subsequently Minister of Agriculture, whom I met in Tallinn, insisted to me that so far from the total productivity of a number of small farms being less than that of a few large estates, it had already surpassed it, although the full results of the reform would not be apparent for a few years. Mr. Ramot told me (with a complacent smile) that he himself had been dispossessed of his own estate, a fact which gives weight to his words, and statistics certainly bear out his assertion, showing that not only is there already more land under cultivation than before the war but that the harvests are greater ; that is to say, the small owner gets as much proportionally from his land as the estate owners, if not more, and the number of cattle and horses is much greater than in 1919.

It is a miracle of reconstruction.

§ 2

Agriculturally, Estonia is divided very definitely into two parts, the northern and the southern ; the north is rocky and unfertile but well suited to the cultivation of potatoes, which are the main crop, while the south contains arable land as rich as any in the Baltic States and is chiefly devoted to rye, barley, flax and dairy-farming.

The farms in the south were the first I had the opportunity of visiting, and this was through the kindness of Mr. Harald Perlitz, a learned professor of theoretical physics at Tartu University. We set off one afternoon, by motor, in the company of Mr. August Tôllasepp, the political editor of *Postimees*, for the districts in the neighbourhood of Lake Peipsi and the country of the Setu, the most primitive and backward of all the peoples in the Baltic States.

Of the road I will say nothing save that, like most others I had been over, it had not been repaired since 1914. We crossed the Ema a few miles out of Tartu by an ancient ferry, built originally by the local Baron (in the old days only the Barons had the right to build ferries) and on the far side of the river was one of the long stone ale-houses which abound all over this part of the countryside. These ale-houses were also the perquisite of the Barons, who

supplied them with vodka from their own distilleries and sold the beer at a handsome profit to themselves. Particularly lucrative were the ale-houses beside the ferries, where the waits were apt to be long and the means of keeping out the cold so readily accessible.

Once across the river we passed on through country that is so typical of the Baltic States—cornfields broken by woodland—though there seemed to be more birch forests than in the south and infinitely more lakes. Everywhere the flax, now ripe, was being taken off the fields.

We stopped the car and had a talk to a young farmer who was busy removing the seeds from the bundles of flax that the women were collecting in the fields. He was a merry fellow, and, though he could not have been more than twenty-two, he told us that he worked his farm himself with the aid of his women-folk. He submitted good-naturedly to his photograph being taken as he de-seeded handfuls of flax by means of an iron comb on a wooden bench, but at first he jibbed at a proffered cigarette, for he had been told, he said, that English cigarettes were doped with opium. I wondered if local tobacco companies had been doing a little subtle propaganda here, but reassured him on this point—and anyhow what I offered him was but a Riga stinkerando and mostly cardboard at that.

The farmer told me that although flax needed more work and trouble, and was an exhausting crop to the soil, it still paid better than rye or barley. It is planted in May and harvested at the end of August, the harvesting being done by the women, half a dozen of whom were at work near-by, pulling up bunches and fastening them in bundles. The seed is then extracted, after which the bundles are laid in water pits, with a few stones on top of them, to soak for two or three weeks and are dried in heated chambers for a fortnight. The flax fibre can then be separated by a hand machine and is ready to be sold in November to local agents of flax companies, many of them English.

It is the aim of the Government to relieve the farmer from the necessity of cleaning his crop, which is done better by machinery. Although the area under flax cultivation has

not yet reached the pre-war level, mainly owing to the increase of wages, various industrial works for the cleansing of raw flax have sprung up and more are under construction. It is from these that the great linen mills at Narva buy their material and considerable quantities are exported to Great Britain, France, Germany, Finland and Sweden. The best quality of flax seed is sold abroad, especially to Holland and Belgium, while the poorer qualities are used for the local manufacture of linseed oil.

§ 3

Coming from Lithuania and Latvia the traveller, passing through Estonia's prosperous farming-country, cannot fail to be struck by the higher methods of agriculture. For more machinery appeared to be in use; one sees little reaping being done by hand, and large numbers of tractors and threshing-machines are being imported (before the war there were only three or four tractors in the whole country) the poorer farmers obtaining them by co-operative methods. Much of this machinery is German, but on one farm I noticed a Ransome tractor, worked by bare-footed women. Many of the farm buildings too are built of granite, borders of which, brought by glaciers from across the Gulf of Finland are found all over the countryside, and nearly every farm of any size is equipped with a telephone and electric light.

Moreover, I found that the telephone service, even in the heart of the country, works almost incredibly well. For when, as the sun was setting, we halted at one of the farms, the Professor got through to Tartu, about fifty miles away, in under two minutes. Nevertheless, I suppose there has never been a telephone service that wholly satisfied its subscribers and I was rather amused to hear our host, Mr. Jaan Mälberg, complain that the Exchange was not open all night.

Mälberg, who was the most handsome man I met in Estonia—tall, with a long, rather ascetic face, a contrast to the usual type, dark hair and blue eyes—showed us that true hospitality which one finds on the farms of the Baltic States. He had not been expecting us, but in a short time

a noble tea was produced. It started with three glasses of vodka, tinted pink with some extract of raspberries. After the long drive it was very good and once again the Baltic States proved a land of glorious contrasts : for I had lunched that day with the President of the Estonian Temperance League and, to avoid hurting his feelings, had tactfully ordered seltzer water instead of the customary long bottle of Estonian beer. After the vodka came a huge plate of grilled ham, boiled eggs (an egg-cup was considerately provided for me since the Baltic custom of eating soft-boiled eggs in the hand is not as free from danger as it might seem), bread, butter, honey and excellent coffee.

" All made on the premises," said our host with a smile.

But I wasn't going to let him take me in like that. The ham, the butter, the bread and the honey, yes. But not that excellent coffee. I had grown coffee in my time and knew well enough that it needed a sun hotter than Estonia's to coax its long cherries from green to red, or even to make them grow at all.

" This wasn't grown on the premises anyhow ? " I said, holding out my cup for more.

" Indeed it was ! " he answered triumphantly.

" You can grow coffee—in Estonia ? " I demanded, bewildered. " You work miracles in this country, I know, but——"

" It isn't coffee," he interrupted, laughing. " That's where you're wrong. It's wheat and barley, roasted and ground. And *that* is grown on the premises."

I had to give him best. But whatever it was, it was a good brew, and a deal better than the stuff that looks (and tastes) much like a river in flood which one is so often asked to drink in England. To the proprietors of all provincial hotels and to the directors of shipping companies (no one ever yet had a good cup of coffee aboard a ship) I commend the wheat and barley mixture. At the same time I suspect that its secret lay not in the mixture but in the making in that farm kitchen, just as the marring of it would be in the galley of a ship.

Mälberg's farm was a typical example of how Estonia

is building her hopes on dairy-farming. Twenty years ago there were no commercial dairies in the country, for, although the Estonians have always been known as a cattle-keeping people, they formerly raised their stock chiefly for the meat and leather it gave them and also for the sake of the manure. The milk was considered of minor importance: indeed, there is an Estonian proverb, now passing into disuse, "Cattle are a necessary evil for the sake of manure."

In time the cattle trade began to form an important part of the farmer's livelihood, and consequently the estate-holders began to import pedigree stock from abroad in order to obtain beasts that were larger and quicker in growth than the home breeds. The estate-owner would frequently sell calves for breeding purposes to his tenants or to the small farmers, and buy their stock when ready for sale, re-selling it to Russia as products of his own cattle yards. The small farmer saw only the sum obtained by the sale and was unable to calculate what the rearing of the animals had cost him, and he obtained no other income from his beasts.*

A few years before the war, however, the co-operative dairy movement was begun and by 1914 the southern part of Estonia was covered with a network of these societies. Many were forced to close down during the war, but the majority of them have resumed activity and others have been established. The Estonian farmer was quick to see the fresh source of income that was being opened up for him by these dairies and the result was an increase in cattle-keeping, and animals were raised for the milk they would produce, not for the price they would fetch at market.

With the object of procuring scientific knowledge, the farmers' societies combined to obtain the services of dairy experts who taught the farmer the latest processes, and associations for the inspection of cattle and for breeding purposes were established; Denmark, the home of specialized dairy-farming, was naturally taken as their example and many young men were sent before the war, and are being sent still, to study Danish methods, though the newly

* Vide *Agricultural Conditions in Estonia*, p. 55.

stablished dairy-school in Estonia is making this less ecessary than before.

Before the war a number of breeds were to be found on he large estates, the majority being Angler and Dutch-Friesian. The small farmers did not confine themselves to one breed, but were in the habit of buying calves from different estates at different times, and consequently in some parts of the country the cattle grew very mixed and the local breed was in danger of becoming extinct, though attempts were made to improve it by the importation of West-Finnish bulls, the two breeds being regarded as having sprung from the same stock. This experiment received discouragement rather than support from the Russian Government, which was instigated by the outcry of the Barons, who were afraid that the value of Estonian cattle might be raised at the expense of their own pedigree stock. Now, however, the tendency is to foster the native breed and to continue the importation of the West-Finnish bulls, while foreign breeds are to be confined to the Angler and Friesian varieties, of which sufficient stud animals exist without need of further importation of new blood; and here again the tendency is to exclude the Dutch-Friesian as more suitable animals of home and Angler breeds take their place, for the general desire is for red cattle in place of mottled; the Home-breed Cattle Society of Estonia now receives far more demands for calves than it can satisfy, and in spite of the appropriations and slaughter of cattle during the war, the number of head of cattle in Estonia, over half a million, is above the pre-war level.

Formerly the chief export market for Estonia's dairy products was St. Petersburg, but now increasing quantities of butter are being exported to Great Britain, Germany and Sweden. Mr. Ramot, who, as Minister of Agriculture, by assisting the co-operative societies did much to bring about the revival of dairy-farming, told me that Estonia can now compete with Danish butter and can put it on the market at the same price. Of its excellence there can be no doubt. I told Mälberg so that afternoon as I spread lavish quantities on my rye bread.

He looked up at me and laughed.

"That is not Estonia's best butter," he said. "The best grades are all sold to the English market. We have learnt that your tastes in England is very high and we send you nothing but the best."

At the time I thought that this remark might be a subtle combination of compliment to my fellow-countrymen and advertisement for Estonian butter, but I learnt afterwards in Tallinn that it was literally true. Estonia is competing hard for our custom and is sending us her best. The trouble is that there is much in a trade name. It is likely that a great deal of the Estonian butter on the English market at the present time is sold as Danish, not because it is inferior in quality but because of the conservatism of the English housewife. And, from the grocer's point of view, it is easier to go on selling a good article that has an assured market than to start selling a new one, however good the new one may be. Estonian butter will not attain the popularity it deserves in England until Englishwomen ask for it—and see that they get it, in spite of everything young men behind counters (who will declare they have never heard of Estonian butter—or Estonia either) may say.

§ 4

After tea on Mälberg's farm we pushed on to Wôôbsu, which lies close to Lake Peipsi and on the fringe of the Setu country. Here we stayed with some friends of Tôllasepp's—the house, I was told, had changed hands between the Estonians and the Bolsheviks six times in 1919, and had served both as a German and Bolshevik headquarters. In a vase in the sitting-room I noticed a bunch of peacocks' feathers and told my hosts the English superstition against them.

"Yes," said the Professor, "all superstitions are not international. You think peacocks' feathers bring bad luck, but you like black cats. But to an Estonian a black cat is regarded only as a bringer of ill fortune."

Wôôbsu is little more than a village, but intensely interesting, for half of it is Estonian, while on the southern side

f the river is a Setu community. On the Estonian side, vhere we stayed, there was every sign of progress, with neat ree-shaded streets in which many new houses were building n granite foundations; while on the Setu side there was ll the dirt and picturesque disorder of the primitive.

These Setu (there are about twenty thousand of them) are till the most primitive people of the Baltic States. Although branch of the Estonian tribe, their country before the war vas not included in the province of Estonia; the German-Balts did not penetrate so far east as their country and they uffered far more and far longer from the effects of Russian nfluence than the Estonians; consequently their develop-ment was very slow. Nominally they belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church, but for years their imposed religion meant ittle to them, for the priests did not speak their language. Dr. Kallas recollects how an old Setu once remarked to him: "The priests and we are the pigs and the sheep: the priests grunt and we bleat, and we cannot understand one another."

The result is that their religion was a mixture of old pagan beliefs and hazy ideas derived from the pictures of the saints in the churches, and for spiritual food they turned to their rich folklore. Until quite recently the ideal of education, anyhow for a woman, was that she should be able to sing her own wedding-songs at her marriage. On the death of a Setu, it is still customary to chant dirges which vary according to the manner of death, age, occupation and position of the deceased, a custom not found among any other Estonian tribe, while it is on record that one old songstress sang from memory for Dr. Hurt over twenty thousand lines of songs—nearly four times the length of Longfellow's *Hiawatha*. This in itself was a remarkable achievement, but the Setu themselves count the power of song improvisation an even higher accomplishment than such feats of memory. Nor has this art died out, for at the great Festival of Song held at Helsingfors in 1921 an aged Setu songstress greeted the President of Finland in a burst of improvised song.*

* Vide *Folklore*, June, 1923, p. 106.

Under the new Republic, however, progress is reaching even the Setu, and a number of schools have been opened in their districts in which they are taught in their own language; the Sunday schools, too, are said to be well attended and have amongst their pupils old ladies and gentlemen of sixty and seventy years of age.

Early on the morning after our arrival at Wôôbsu we crossed the river by a ferry boat to see the Setu village, and passed many of the people punting along the shallows in their flat-bottomed boats, for the Setu are fishermen as well as farmers. The houses of the village, which are built along the river bank, were unlike any others I had seen in the Baltic States and are laid out on the Russian plan, the house, barn and stables (all of timber and roofed with thatch) forming three sides of a square, leaving a courtyard in the centre, with a great doorway, which when closed would effectually keep out intruders, on the fourth.

As in Latgalia and certain parts of Lithuania, the Setu are accustomed to hold their land communally; that is, each village has a certain area of land which is divided (in long strips, to divide impartially the good and bad parts of the land) every five years between the various families by the elders of the village. The temporary owner farms his own strip and each keeps his own crop, but it is, of course, a pernicious method of agriculture, since the communal habit does not rise to the pitch of caring for land that will shortly pass into the hands of another owner. The Government is making attempts to change this system and to give each family its own farm, but even though the aggregate of the land held by each village would then be substantially greater than it is at present, the change is not welcomed, anyhow by the older people, since the Setu have all the intense conservatism of a primitive folk and dislike change in any form.

In appearance the Setu men are Russian in type, with great fair untrimmed beards and blue eyes. The women wear the ordinary white head-cloths and for festivals and holidays keep their distinctive form of the national dress, but for everyday wear most of them have a long tight-

fitting white serge coat, often not a little dirty, reaching to the ankles; this coat is typically Setu and is not met with elsewhere. Several women we met upon the road I tried to photograph, but they were coy and made off at a great pace. The Professor told me they believed that if they allowed themselves to be photographed they would have no faces left to go to heaven with.

Even one who allowed us to watch her carding flax in a great wooden frame was no less uncompromising, but later, as we left Wôôbsu in the car, I spied one in front of us on her way to market. She, too, was diffident and refused to stop. For a hundred yards we pursued her. She would turn to protest for a moment, laughing and covering her face, and then, just as I got her in focus, would make off again, like a leaf before the wind. But at last she gave in, and I had my way. After the ordeal was over we hoisted her aboard the car and gave her a lift towards her destination. She was nervous, but delighted, and when we set her down she swore she would remember us for ever, as she had never been in a motor-car before.

The photograph of her, in her long white coat and her laughing face beneath the white head-cloth, ought to face this page. But alas for the vanity of human endeavour, in the excitement of getting the old lady into the car and of allaying her fears once she had found a seat, like the veriest amateur I forgot to turn on that spool and a few moments later took another photograph on top of her, by which time she was well on her way to market and so lost to me for good and all.

After this distressing incident we made our way, by indifferent roads, until we came to a fishing village on the shores of Lake Peipsi; we walked along the sandy beach, past an old machine-gun post near which were remains of trenches and strands of rusty wire. Far across the water we could see Soviet Russia. I asked the Professor what would happen if we were to take a boat and row across, and was told that we should certainly be met with rifle fire from the Bolshevist posts.

"You," added the Professor thoughtfully, "would make

a very convenient hostage for the Soviet Government to hold in case any Bolshevik leader misbehaved himself in England."

It seemed that the Thames or the lake at Ranelagh was a safer place for aquatic sports, and so I got my camera out and took a photograph of some fishing huts on the shore of the lake. As I was doing so, I heard a commotion behind me and turned to find my friends having an altercation with two giants in green uniform. They were, it appeared, representatives of the Estonian Frontier Force and apparently they had had their eye on me ever since I stepped out of the car. Had I been alone it might have gone hard with me. But as soon as the Professor explained that I was English they were all smiles (really I never knew the value of my country till I went to the Baltic States) and far from making any more difficulties they begged me to take a snapshot of themselves; later we gave them a lift along the road.

One, a man of superb physique (it may be remembered that Hackensmidt was an Estonian) told me that he had been to Cowes as a sailor in the Tsar's yacht the *Standard*, and now he was employed in the more arduous job of keeping Russians out of Estonia. Men for the Frontier Force, he told me, were enlisted voluntarily for a year, and stationed along the frontier in small posts. It was lonely work, he said, especially in winter, but since their chief duty is the prevention of vodka smuggling they get a certain amount of fun, and at night they shoot at any boat approaching the Estonian shore.

Peipsi is the second largest lake in Europe and abounds with fish. Naturally enough it is the source of many an Estonian legend and the mythical story of its formation has recently been told by Lord Ernle with great charm.* By his permission I am allowed to quote it here:

"The events are said to have happened in the days before foreign merchants had landed from their ships, before mail-clad warriors had invaded the country to set up with their sharp-edged swords the cross of Christ, and when the people lived, in perfect freedom, under the rule of their

* In *The Nineteenth Century and After*, September, 1924, p. 346.

great King Karkus. The only child of the king, the Princess Rannaura, carried off by the witch Peipa, grew up to girlhood in harsh captivity. The white gods dared not attempt her rescue. But they gave her four gifts—a silver comb, a carder, an apple, and a linen robe—telling her that if she threw them behind her in their order they would help her to escape. Watching her opportunity and carrying her gifts with her, the girl stole away from the witch's house and fled as fast as she could towards her father's castle. She had not gone far when she found herself pursued. Mounted on a huge cock, Peipa was close on her heels. The Princess threw behind her the silver comb. It became a wide rushing river which the witch could not cross till she had found a ford. But she was once more in close pursuit. The girl threw down the carder, and it shot up at once into a forest, so dense that the witch had to ride round it for a whole day. But the cock was fleet, and again the witch was hard on the girl's track. Then the girl threw down the apple. Instantly it turned into a high mountain over which the witch had to climb. Now the Princess could see her home shining in the distance. Yet, faint with weariness and hunger, she made slow progress. Once more the witch was fast catching her up. Only the fourth gift remained. The girl threw down the linen robe, and straightway it became the vast lake which still bears the witch's name, in whose foaming water Peipa and the cock were swallowed up."

§ 5

All southern Estonia is rich and yearly growing more prosperous; and no district is more prosperous than that of Viljandi (Fellin) a few miles east of Lake Vorts (Wirz). To Viljandi I set off from Tallinn one evening by the narrow-gauge railway whose terminus is the port of Pärnu.

For a trifling sum I obtained a *platzkart* for a sleeper. These sleepers were a good deal less comfortable than those of the second-class on the Narva line and on a different plan, running in double tiers on either side of the long coach, which was lighted by a solitary candle at either end. My *platzkart* included the provision of a sheet and pillow, but I noticed

that most of my fellow-travellers, more economically minded, had brought their own pillows and did not worry about sheets.

Mine was a lower berth and the upper one was not more than three feet above it. Being unable to read, I lay down, and soon perceived the sock-clad feet of the occupant of the upper berth dangling before my face. An irresistible impulse to tickle the soles of them seized me, just to see what would happen, and I shall always regret that I refrained, as one does regret most of one's refrainments. How would he have taken it, that burly Estonian above me ? Treated it as a joke ? Or set the carriage in an uproar ? Or called the guard and had me arrested ? Or throttled me as I lay defenceless in my bunk ? Admittedly men have been throttled for doing less. I missed that chance of probing Estonian character and I shall never know. As it was, I diffidently removed my trousers, doing my best to avoid the eyes of the lady in the berth across the way (there were no curtains) and tried to sleep as the train bumped over the sleepers, like a dinghy on a choppy sea, until we reached Viljandi in the grey dawn.

Five of a summer's morn is not much of a time to present a letter of introduction, and I was about to make myself as comfortable as I could in the Viljandi refreshment room when I was hailed by a friendly gentleman with a Ford car. He was Mr. Koiva, a friend of Pastor Lattik, to whom Dr. Kallas had given me an introduction, and had come to meet me. Greater hospitality, I say, I have not found than this : that a man should get up in the small hours and bring his car to the station to meet a total stranger. Yet that is the kind of hospitality one finds in the Baltic States and it warmed my heart more surely than any tot of rum could have done that chilly morning. Nor was this befriender of strangers content with that, for when we reached his house he insisted on my sitting down to a meal of anchovies, cheese, bread and coffee that was waiting and then took me to my room and bade me sleep till nine.

Instead of sleeping I watched the sun rising above the pine forest that fringed the lake below my bedroom window

(a bedroom, by the way, that was equipped with a wash-basin, h. and c.) and at half-past nine sat down to another breakfast at which Madame appeared. I was warned to do justice to it, since I might get nothing more till evening.

Soon afterwards I met Pastor Lattik, who besides ministering to the large congregation of his church at Viljandi is also a member of Parliament and teaches Divinity at one of the High Schools for girls. Cultivated, broad-minded, enthusiastic and courteous—so he impressed me: what a Frenchman would call *un homme très sympathique* and a fine example of the type of man who is helping to build up Estonia to-day.

Not far from Mr. Koiva's house are the ruins of the baronial castle that is built, like all old castles in the Baltic States, high on a hill with a circling stream below. This rivulet is called the Stream of Sorrow, because the reddish tinge of its water was said to have been caused by the blood of Estonian serfs who had been killed by the Barons. There is a story that there came a time when serfs could bear the tyranny of their overlord no longer, and determined to make an end of him. In order to escape the detection of the guards, a number of them had themselves tied up in sacks and carried into the castle with loads of corn. The mother of one of these valiant adventurers, however, heard of the plot, and, fearful of the punishment that would be meted out to them went to the Baron and told him everything, hoping that in his gratitude he would spare her son. Poor lady, her knowledge of the psychology of the German-Balt was sadly at fault, for the Baron, so far from showing any discrimination, set his guards to plunge their lances into every sack that came through the castle gates.

Having seen what there was to see of Viljandi, a town of some twelve thousand inhabitants, Mr. Koiva, Pastor Lattik, the Headmaster of the Girls' School and I got into the Ford and set off for Halliste, driving for twenty-five miles through some of the richest country in Estonia. Just as in Lithuania and Latvia, there were signs on every hand of how the land was coming to life again. New farm-houses were going up and the old ones stood amidst a riot of

flowers, while the broad plains of ripening corn and flax stretched away from either side of the road, broken, as ever, by little lakes which mirrored the pine trees clustered on their shores. Besides the small farms we passed one large estate, which is now an experimental farm and an agricultural school. That was but another sign of the times.

At Halliste is a large flax factory, the capital of which has been found mainly by the neighbouring farmers, who sell their produce to it, and are thus relieved of the necessity of cleansing their flax themselves. As it comes in from the fields the flax is steeped in huge water-vats for a few days and is then dried and broken up by machinery, most of the workers being women, who have living accommodation provided them by the company. The produce of the mill is sold as prepared flax, ready for manufacture, but in Viljandi itself I went over a factory where the flax is spun and woven, though there are no facilities for bleaching the linen turned out. The Halliste factory also has an installation for extracting linseed oil from the flax seed, and a small saw-mill as well to meet local needs.

On the way home in the afternoon Mr. Lattik suddenly gave a hail and pointed to a tall figure in shirt sleeves driving a harrow across a field.

" One of our members of Parliament," said he, in explanation. " You see, he is a farmer first and a politician afterwards ! "

The tall figure waved his hat in answer to the hail, left his horse in charge of a farm-hand, came to greet us, and insisted on our coming in for a light meal. Afterwards he showed us round his farm. There was every sign of prosperity and he had some fine cemented pigsties ; but what interested me most was the bath-house, a separate building of timber, such as is attached to most of the farms in the Baltic States. Inside was a great oven half-full of large stones. The stones are heated and then cold water is thrown on them to produce hot vapour, and here once a week the farm hands bathe together, flogging themselves with birch twigs to promote a good healthy sweat. This form of bathing is a legacy from the Russians ; yet whereas

HARVESTING FLAX

IN THE FLAX FACTORY

the Russian has his weekly bath but does not change his clothes, and the German changes his clothes weekly but does not bathe, the Estonian, having learnt something from both Russian and German, now does both.

I took a photograph of the farmer-politician outside his bath-house, but he was considerably exercised in his mind lest my friends at home should imagine that he was standing on the threshold of his farm. I promised to explain.

## CHAPTER XV

## THE PROMISE OF THE FUTURE

Leaving Tallinn by seaplane—Why we should help the Baltic States—Their regard for Great Britain and the United States—The work of General Burt and the British Mission—Boy Scouts and Girl Guides the pioneers of friendship—Exchange of hospitality—Increase of interest in English literature—Need of English books—Hampered British Consuls—The future of the Baltic States—The black cloud of Russia—Possibility of federation—Popular feeling averse to Russian sovereignty—Russia may be content with assured freedom of transit—Working towards a Baltic League—The Baltic States have come to stay—Sons of peasants—Their achievement—Prospects of a happy future.

### § 1

MY last glimpse of the Baltic States was on a cloudless morning when, high above the Gulf of Finland in a German seaplane, I watched Tallinn melting to the sea. Far below me, in unruffled water that was as blue as a delphinium, some of Estonia's islets lay like the leaves of water-lilies in a pond. And as I saw the spire of St. Olaf rising sheer and black above the peaked roofs of the town, and the golden domes of the Russian cathedral blazing like fiery balls in the morning sun, that " one thought " which Ringold Kalning had given me came back to my mind : " Many foreigners are coming to our country now," he had said. " Most of them have one idea only—what can they get out of Latvia ? They do not think what can they do for her."

Now if you were to walk along the Strand and were to ask ten Men in the Street, one after the other, what they could do to help the Baltic States, probably five of them would inquire what the Baltic States were; four would suggest that in their opinion the less we meddled with the Balkans the better and the remaining one (we will suppose him to be a knowledgeable fellow) would say, " Why should

we help them? After all, what are they to us? We've helped to set 'em on their feet. By this time they ought to be able to fend for themselves."

As I have tried to show in this book, the Baltic countries are fending for themselves and fending very well. Although they are still children in the family of European States, they have passed the crawling stage. They have learnt to stand by themselves. Soon they will be running with the best. But they have not forgotten that it was Great Britain and the United States who helped them out of the crawling stage, and they are grateful. And apart from altruistic considerations there are practical reasons why we of the English-speaking race should draw these countries closer to us in bonds of friendship.

In disorganized Russia one of the greatest markets of the world has been lost. But we can buy from the Baltic States everything we bought formerly from Russia, with the exception of minerals, and we can sell them many of the wares that went to Russia before the war. Moreover, these Republics on the fringe of the Baltic Sea are the doorways of Russia, and if we make them our close friends now they will be valuable trade outposts when Russia is once more reorganized as, sooner or later, she must be. Nor is that all. At the present time Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania form, with Poland, the one great barrier between Bolshevism and Western Europe. Therefore we have at least as much to gain from their friendship as they have to gain from ours.

At present the inhabitants of the Baltic States know us better than we know them and, fortunately for us, they have gained that knowledge from the best types of our fellow-countrymen. That the word Englishman acts as a talisman in these countries to-day is due chiefly to General Burt and the officers of the British Missions to the Baltic States, just as the good feeling towards the United States has been engendered by the members of the American Mission, whose work of mercy I have briefly described.

It must be remembered, too, that for many years there have been bonds between the United States and the Baltic countries owing to the large colonies of Lithuanians, Letts

and Estonians in America, but ten years ago in the Baltic Great Britain was little more than a name. Now that is changed. The affectionate regard in which General Burt himself is held throughout these countries is remarkable. By his wise counsel and straight dealing he has won the hearts of these simple people who had never known what it was to have a friend before. Nor is this regard confined to official circles, for peasants respect his name no less than Presidents and are as anxious to shake his hand. He has in his possession what must be some of the most touching and grateful tributes ever written by Ministers of Foreign States to a British soldier, but he prizes just as highly the Christmas cards that are sent him by Baltic Girl Guides. So that when, on my return from my travels, General Burt asked me if I had " come across any old friends of his out there " I was able to reply with sincerity and truth, " General, everyone I met in the Baltic States seemed to be your friend."

§ 2

It was well for the Baltic States, and well for England, that General Burt was in charge of that British Mission. By his personality, which counts far more than policy, he laid the foundations of a friendship between our land and theirs, and every Englishman who finds his way made smooth in the Baltic States to-day is really basking in that reflected glory, just as every American is basking in the reflected glory of Colonel Ryan and those gallant men and women who worked with him. And although the British Government itself has been apt to neglect the young Republics, and particularly Lithuania, since it helped to set them up, the friendly feeling towards our country still remains. It would be deplorable were it allowed to die, for, as I have suggested, friends are too rare to be estranged by indifference or neglect.

How then are we to come to know the Baltic peoples better than we do ? Well, happily enough, our Boy Scouts and our Girl Guides have been our pioneers. Parties of British Scouts and Guides have visited the Baltic States, and those visits have been returned. It is to be hoped that they

will be repeated and also that in time we may welcome Lithuanians, Letts and Estonians to our schools and colleges.

"When, on a visit to Oxford," said Dr. Kallas, the Estonian Minister in London, in a recent address to the Overseas League, "I saw your colleges, trees and libraries, centuries old, and sensed how, in this wonderful atmosphere of peace, science and learning had been cultivated for centuries, before my eyes rose the picture of our own Oxford, the Alma Mater Dorpatensis, whose home was thrice burned down to its foundations. And I dared to think whether or no a nation which had been allowed to develop its culture in such peace as you have been fortunate enough to do, was not morally bound to share its culture with other less-blessed nations. This duty may, however, be regarded from various standpoints and you, I believe, have chosen Imperial preference in this respect also."

Here, indeed, there is a difficulty: the high cost of living and of education in England. It is only this that deters many young Baltic men and women from coming to our shores, and this was brought home to me once by a Lett I met in Riga, who was on vacation from Paris where he was studying law: it was simply the question of money, he told me, that had sent him to study in France instead of England. It is to be hoped that our Universities will in time get into closer touch with those of the Baltic States, and that scholarships may be founded for Baltic students, who could then complete their education in English schools.

There is no reason why young Baltic farmers, or farmers-to-be, should not be able to spend some time with us studying our methods; Baltic Army officers might be attached temporarily to our General Staff, as is being done in France, and British firms with interests in the Baltic States might take into their offices for a time young Lithuanian, Lettish and Estonian business men with a knowledge of English, nor should it be difficult to arrange for young men and girls from the Baltic States to spend part of their holidays with English families where there are young people who would return the visit the following year. Nothing but good could come from such interchange of hospitality. Now that

English is being taught in the Baltic schools the barrier of language is fast disappearing, and if our young people came back with a smattering of Lithuanian, Lettish and Estonian, that would be all to the good.

Visitors from the Baltic States would bring us new interests, new points of view. Moreover, apart from the pleasure of their company, one may learn so much about one's own country from foreign guests, for with them one is constrained to visit " places of interest " to which one would rush off if they happened to be abroad but seldom goes to see at home. As Mr. E. V. Lucas once said in *A Wanderer in Holland*, " many of us are so constituted that we never use our eyes until we are on foreign soil. It is as though a Cook's ticket performed an operation for cataract."

Anyhow, I never realized how near the Baltic States are to London from one aspect until Miss Gudovicaite, who had befriended me in Kaunas, came to stay with my wife and me in England. She told me that the three things that had impressed her most in our country were the excellence of the English roads, the incivility of shop assistants in Oxford Street and the number of Jews in the Mile End Road. How she found her way to the Mile End Road I never quite discovered, for it would not have occurred to me to take her, but I found that she had even done some shopping there, beating the prices down in pure devilment.

" I cannot speak English," she said, " but in the Mile End Road I talked Yiddish and everyone understood. It was just like being back in Kaunas."

§ 3

Undoubtedly the best, perhaps the only, way of understanding anything of a foreign country is to stay in the homes of its people. Thus in a few weeks one may learn more than in a year of hotels and inns. However, it will not be possible for all travellers to stay on those hospitable Baltic farms, and I have already made a few suggestions as to how the new Republics could help us to help themselves by providing facilities for British and American tourists.

But for those who cannot pay a visit to the Baltic States,

or entertain their representatives when they visit us, there is another way of helping. As I have mentioned, English is becoming increasingly popular in all three States. The Baltic peoples are born linguists. Often the peasants speak three languages, while better educated men and women speak five or six. It is probable that the generation which is now learning English in the Baltic Schools will treat the subject more seriously than we treat French in ours, for we are not, and are never likely to be, a race of linguists ; nor, with all deference to them, are the Americans.

This interest in our tongue needs feeding. During the war many of the libraries in the Baltic States were destroyed, and with them were destroyed such English books as they contained. And now the Baltic peoples are clamouring for English books. These are, we know, expensive, and moreover 7s. 6d. or 10s. 6d. means more in the Baltic than in England or America.

The only English books I saw on sale in Kaunas, Riga or Tallinn were in the Tauchnitz edition and the selection was very limited. I was assured by both Ministers and by private individuals that English books would be most welcome gifts and it must be remembered that although winter evenings in England are long enough, they are longer still in the Baltic States, particularly in Estonia (Tallinn is in the same latitude as the Orkneys) so that there is plenty of time for reading.

Books of every kind are wanted : fiction, English classics, scientific works, histories, travel books and belles-lettres. I was told in Kaunas that the Librarian of the Central Library received demands even for books in English on political economy. Nor need there be any trouble or expense in the despatch of these books, for the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian Consuls-General in London and New York will be glad to take charge of them. Nearly everyone has books to spare and if presented to the Baltic peoples such gifts will be the welcome ambassadors of the English tongue.

§ 4

These are a few ways in which the people of Great Britain and the United States can help, and take an interest in, the new Republics. That they will be grateful enough for any thoughtfulness on our part one may be very sure, and it is probable that their steadfastness of character will make them good friends. By keeping their countries purged of Communists they are rendering a service to the whole world, a service greater than many of us, in our security, can realize. People who have endured so much, and overcome so much, when they were left utterly alone, are not likely now to give way if they feel they have our sympathy and goodwill.

There is reason to believe that British and American firms are not making the most of the chances offered them in the Baltic States, while Germany, with far less encouragement, is making every effort to capture these valuable markets. This again is due largely to ignorance of local conditions, to lack of enterprise, to conservatism, and unquestionably the Governments of the three States might make things easier for foreign firms who display an interest in their countries by attempting to eliminate some of the bureaucratic methods by which petty officials are enabled to cause irritation that might easily be avoided.

Admittedly the Baltic markets mean more to Great Britain than to the United States, though the volume of trade between the Baltic and America is increasing every year. And, so far as Great Britain is concerned, there is no doubt that the Consuls who, as her representatives in these countries, should be able to render great service in helping to secure markets for her goods, are hampered by lack of adequate resources.

Mr. P. J. Hannon, member for the Moseley Division of Birmingham, recently called the attention of the House of Commons to this situation and mentioned that the total sum provided to enable British commerce and industry to be adequately represented in Estonia is £411.

" Why," he said, " a commercial traveller going to a city

like Reval representing a respectable British firm would be allowed as pocket money more than the Great British Government allows its Consular representative to enable him to discharge his duties effectively and efficiently there."*

He added that the British Consul at Riga received no more than £770 as expenses to look after the whole of the interests of the British in Latvia. "That parsimonious policy," he declared, "of limiting the opportunities of our agents abroad to spend money so that British manufactures may be sold is stupid and foolish. So long as they are cribbed, cabined and confined within the limits of a few pounds a year for their personal expenditure, it is impossible to get anything like successful results."

The movement of British trade in the Baltic is undoubtedly increasing, but not so fast as it might. Germany is still the greatest seller, though German goods have become dearer and there is a decided preference for British. Germany is competing hard for the market and a market once lost is not easy to recapture. I have suggested some of the reasons why British firms are hanging back, but it is likely that the chief reason of all is that they feel uncertain of the future and doubtful of the stability of the new Republics.

## § 5

In the Baltic States there is, admittedly, always a black cloud on the horizon: Russia. And before British and American business men give the credits that the firms of the Baltic States so sadly need, and before British and American capitalists invest their money in these new countries, they want to know, properly enough, that the future is assured. The general feeling amongst men who have not studied the question very deeply (and also, it must be admitted, amongst a certain number of men who have) is that these young States will sooner or later be swallowed up by Russia, since once Russia is reorganized she will turn her eyes once more to her lost ports on the Baltic and will never rest content with the Neva river as her sole outlet to

* *Hansard*, vol. 1, p. 176.

the sea, and with a single Northern port and naval base that is ice-bound for half the year.

The future of the Baltic States is undoubtedly bound up with the future of Russia. Each of the three States, however, has shown that she can look after herself: the Bolsheviks were ejected when the resources of the Republics were at their lowest ebb, and, owing to the Agrarian Reform policy of settling peasants on the land with farms of their own, there is little danger of the people themselves throwing in their lot with the Communists. They would have nothing to gain from such a course and everything to lose, and Estonia has shown the world quite recently that she intends to stand no nonsense from Communist intriguers within her boundaries. Moreover, if Soviet Russia wantonly attacked the Baltic States the rest of Europe, for very obvious reasons, could hardly afford to stand by and look on.

From the Russia of to-day, then, the States have not so much to fear as from the Russia of the future. Owing to their geographical position, their natural market is Russia, although they are bravely creating for themselves markets elsewhere now that the Russian market is dead. A tenable view, therefore, might be that in the event of Russia becoming reconstructed, it would suit them to be within the Russian Customs Tariff. It is true that they are finding increasing markets in Great Britain and elsewhere for their agricultural produce, but it is impossible for them to compete industrially with Great Britain in the European market, whereas they understand the Russian market, which would readily absorb the whole of their output at good prices.

The three States are united against Bolshevism, but there is reason to believe that (although probably no Baltic Minister would dare to admit it) the prospect of the Republics becoming autonomous States under a new Russia would not be regarded by all highly placed officials and Army officers with disfavour. Such men have served, and are serving, their countries loyally enough, but it is idle to close one's eyes to the fact that they have little to look forward to. Many of the men now at the head of affairs who now receive no more than £20 a month—because the States can pay no more—

formerly had important positions and earned large salaries in Russia. Most of the senior officers served in the Russian Army, where they had opportunities of promotion that are denied them now, since there are but a few high appointments and a captain's pay is something like £6 or (in Lithuania) £11 a month.

Against this, on the other hand, is that intense national feeling for complete independence, for which so many sacrifices have been made, and whether the mass of the Baltic peoples would tolerate the idea of Russian sovereignty again is very doubtful. I have heard the opinion expressed that, owing to the heavy taxation, which cannot now be met by " squaring " an official as was the custom in the old days, the peasants, or anyhow the well-to-do farmers, would also welcome a return to the old regime, but it is difficult to believe that, having suffered so much to obtain their freedom, and with the memory of centuries of serfdom still so vivid, the majority of the population would submit to Russian overlordship, even in a modified form, without a struggle.

§ 6

However that may be, the reconstruction of Russia and the possibility of some such form of voluntary federation is a long way off. It is of the immediate future that the Baltic States have to think, and few save political visionaries any longer believe in the likelihood of a dramatic change in the Government of Russia, such as would place in power an Imperialist party avowedly determined to restore Russia to her pre-war boundaries.

So far as I have been able to gather from conversations with the leaders of public opinion in the three States, a guarantee of permanent territorial inviolability is sought not so much in their combined powers of physical resistance to aggression from without, as in the steady development and evolution of the democratic idea among the peoples of the neighbouring larger States, Russia more particularly.

It is noteworthy that the Bolsheviks themselves claim authorship of the " self-determination of nations " principle, and that the Soviet Government has concluded treaties with

all three States, unreservedly recognizing their national independence; and although these engagements do not prevent the Third Internationale from conniving at and inciting Communistic agitation, it is highly improbable that unless this agitation should assume far larger proportions than hitherto—of which there seems scant likelihood—the Soviet Government would openly attempt to crush them in a military sense.

This belief again is based upon the assumption that the Baltic States, in their international relations, will do nothing to hamper transit trade through their respective territories, thus forestalling any later economic pretext for the reconquest of the Baltic seaboard on the ground of the necessity for Russia's retention of her former ports. Moreover, the Baltic States, being signatories to the Barcelona Convention, are already pledged to grant all friendly countries free transit through their territories in time of peace, and they are in fact doing everything possible to facilitate trade with Russia for this very reason.

Russian post-war popular feeling, so far as it is ascertainable, seems rather sympathetic than otherwise with the aspirations of the smaller peoples, and so far as it is genuinely Bolshevik in character, looks not for subjection of these peoples to an alien yoke, but rather to internal proletarian revolution. It appears, therefore, permissible to argue that any future regime in Russia will seriously reckon with the strength of national sentiment in the Baltic States, and with the consequent certainty that the renewed incorporation of foreign and hostile elements in the body politic would be a source not of strength but of weakness to Russian unity. As it is, Russia has assured freedom of transit at cheap rates and ports whose facilities are increasing every year, and this, since she has no money to develop either ports or railways herself, suits her very well.

Baltic leaders are fully alive to the danger which would threaten their countries in the event of reaction in Russia which might take the form of a spurious nationalism clamouring for the restoration of the pre-war frontiers. Such a possibility cannot be entirely ruled out of political

forecasts. The peril, nevertheless, is not imminent, and the chances are at least equally good that future Russian administrators will remember the precedent of the war, which proved how entirely Russia had failed to absorb the non-Slavonic races of the Baltic region. Surely, then, after actual experience of independence has convinced the Baltic States of their superior capacity for self-government and cultural progress, and has hardened their resolve to defend both, it would be far more difficult than before for Russia, or any other power, to hold down by force a united population of some six millions.

Should any hostile aggression from Russia come, however, it would seem that Lithuania is the safest of the three States, since none of her present territory runs with Russian frontiers, and she holds nothing which Russia specially covets—Klaipeda being the one Baltic port that was not part of the Russian Empire before the war, and, moreover, her relations with the Soviet Government are good at the present time. For her the future holds more fear from Germany, who has yet to reconcile herself for the loss of her most northern port, but here again Lithuania is doing all she can to establish and maintain friendly relations.

Estonia, on the other hand, although she concluded a favourable peace treaty with the Soviet Government, has more to fear from Russia since, like Latvia, she has what was formerly a great Russian port and, by the very courageousness of her policy in shooting Communists, is in danger of antagonizing her great neighbour.

Nevertheless, the spectacle of complete union among the Baltic States themselves, of which the beginnings are already visible, will help to discourage any future Russian encroachment upon their dearly won liberties, and it goes without saying that the purely defensive character of such an entente must never be obscured.

The three Republics realized long ago that in unity lay their strength, and, at the invitation of the Latvian Government, a conference, attended by representatives from Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland and Poland, took place at Riga in 1920, with the result that a permanent Inter-Baltic

Committee, with headquarters at Riga, was formed. Since then much has been done, and once Lithuania has settled her differences with Poland and the question of tariffs between Latvia and Estonia has been satisfactorily arranged, there will be no obstacle in the way of a Baltic League. It is probable that shortly a common Customs tariff and common Customs laws will come into force as a basis of complete economic union, so that the products of the three countries, both agricultural and commercial, will enjoy full freedom from inter-State Customs duties. Military and political treaties will probably be formed at the same time.

It is possible that even Finland may become a member of such a League, though it must be noted that Finland does not group herself as one of the Baltic States. These nations have much to gain from such a union ; they all have intellectual and economic interests in common and all are vitally concerned with the freedom of trade in the Baltic, while overshadowed as they are by two great countries like Russia and Germany the political interests of a common defence is enough to bring them close.

Danger from other directions other than Russia may, for practical purposes, be discounted. Neither Russia nor Germany would tolerate, for example, a serious Polish attempt to crush Lithuania or Latvia, and a really strong Russia would not tolerate a similar attempt on the part of Germany.

After all, the nationalistic movement is by no means confined to Russia's former territories. We see it manifested everywhere to-day. Great Britain's own colonies are now virtually independent State organisms, and have been rechristened the Dominions. The Irish Free State is an example still nearer home. It is in the growth and strengthening of this international democratic sentiment which, one must hope, will become more and more translated into practice by a real League of Nations still to come, that the smaller States, including those of the Baltic, should find an additional security against unprovoked aggression.

On the other hand, if the new Republics should unfortunately fail to rise to the height of their international

responsibilities, both political and economic, and should be guilty of a policy of obstruction, they would inevitably forfeit the sympathy of this world democracy and by so doing sign their own death warrants.

There is, however, nothing in their post-war record to warrant the fear that they will ever be so foolish.

§ 7

Few Englishmen are better informed on the subject of the Baltic States than General Burt, for besides the knowledge he acquired in the countries themselves, he has kept in close touch with them since they were cleared of their enemies. I cannot do better, therefore, than quote from a summary of the situation he has been kind enough to send me :

" The first danger these countries have to face," he writes, " is that of being swamped either by the Soviets or by Germany, thereby losing their hard-won freedom. This in the opinion of some might come either by the discovery of a pretext for offensive action or by peaceful penetration. The Soviets might bring about the former by an internal revolution, or, as in the case of the recent attempt at Tallinn, by a raid which they refused to recognize but of which they approved. These three countries, however, are well aware of such efforts and immediately take steps to crush risings, as was shown by General Laidoner's rapid dealing with the situation in Tallinn.

" If it came to actual war, it should be remembered that the Republics, who had been disarmed by the Germans during their occupation, not only held their own but, when war material eventually arrived from Great Britain and France, were able to drive back the Soviets on one side and the Germans on the other and so clear their countries. At this time all party feeling was set aside, and all worked with the one object of freeing their territory from the invaders, and this they would certainly do again. General Balodis, who was Commander-in-Chief of the Latvian Army, controlled the operations when first the Germans, then the Soviets, were driven back, and General Radzin, his former Chief

Staff Officer and the present Commander-in-Chief have plenty of experience in dealing with such dangers. The same may be said of General Laidoner and General Zukauskas, the Lithuanian Commander-in-Chief, who was Chief of the Staff to his Army in those days. These Generals are great friends and understand each other thoroughly, which is an asset to combined operations, should danger arise.

" Again the Allies, who were to a great extent responsible for the birth of these nations as independent Republics and who now have much money invested in them, would surely have some interest in their safety and would hardly stand by and see them overrun, their trade ruined and a new danger of world conflict started. It might be hoped that some or all, by protection at sea, by supplying war material (both these measures would be necessary) and by economic action, would protect these peoples, whom they recognized and supported on the principle of the self-determination of small nations.

" As regards peaceful penetration, the Germans are hard at work in trade, banks and schools. This is a well-recognized fact, and it is not in accordance with the wishes of the people. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania generally would like to see Great Britain supply their demands, but the distance and, until lately, our indifference have lost us many opportunities. However, British trade with these countries is steadily increasing and a counter-influence to the German penetration is setting in. One of the difficulties is the necessity for capital; but progress has been made and already several loans have been negotiated. In the meantime, the inhabitants, by sheer work and by their progress in trade, agriculture and industry, are accumulating money. They have all learnt to be economical, and firm finance is following. With patience and moderation, these three Republics will recover from the war as well as, if not better than, the big nations whose requirements are so much greater. One important advantage they have is that men, women and children love their work. ' Every spade put in the ground, or needle in the cloth, is another step to the

long-waited independence.' This has been an unwritten motto of the people.

"A difficulty that they will only overcome with time is that of finding sufficient capable and independent officials, with clear political views, for government and administrative services. There are far too many parties in conflict with each other. This can only be remedied by experience, by strong patriotic feeling and by putting aside personal ambition. These qualities were most in evidence during the fighting. Now, with the opening of trade, the presence of numerous foreign elements, foreign trade competition, old statesmen arriving and young new statesmen in positions, and heavy propaganda by elements seeking to gain influence, commercial or personal, there seems to be a clash of arms in the political arena. This does not show stability, and has caused many and frequent changes in office. But, as I have said, these difficulties can only be overcome by experience, travel and education, and, all things considered, there is not much to complain of. In fact, there are signs already of definite lines of political thought, perhaps brought about by the visits of politicians to Western Europe. The inhabitants are beginning to understand things better and have broader views as to what is necessary for the welfare of their countries.

"Like all countries, these new Republics have to contend against a certain number of foreign traders who come and take what they can but bring nothing good. This was particularly so in the first years, when inexperience and urgent need lent themselves to every form of speculation, and much harm was done by these vultures. The officials and traders have, however, learnt their lesson and now many sound business transactions are being carried on; but this danger has to be watched and the influence of these trade affairs has not entirely disappeared.

"The insecurity of the coast from a naval point of view is a danger that cannot at present be met, Estonia being the only country having a few coast defence ships. These are quite inadequate, and the three States must depend on and hope for outside help, though in time, of course, each

may have sufficient money to organize its own fleet or some system of combined naval defence ; this matter is not overlooked. However, these ports would certainly not be seized with the approval of the outside world, and such a step would probably bring about economic opposition by the Allies, with whom the Soviet is very anxious to establish commercial relations.

" Lastly, another matter which cannot be controlled is the variability of the seasons. These are agricultural lands and a bad season has a very demoralizing effect on the inhabitants. But they have weathered many a storm ; they are very hardy races, and now that their financial position is improving, they can better withstand such setbacks, and in good seasons they soon make up their losses.

" The achievements of the three States are wonderful, and might be described under the title of ' A Miracle.' How many people, when they criticize these countries—the Governments' handling of politics, trade regulations and so on—realize the difficulties they have had to contend with ; how, after only four years' experience, they have established laws and constitutions, and have avoided many mistakes which big countries are still making after centuries of experience. Even a visit to-day to these Republics does not enable one to appreciate fully what they were like in 1919, how hopeless and devastated everything appeared. The arm-chair critic who expresses opinions without ever visiting the Baltic States knows nothing about their conditions and judges only from books, often merely by listening to the stories and propaganda of their disappointed enemies."

§ 8

On the whole, therefore, after carefully weighing the various factors in the case, one feels justified in believing that the Baltic States have come to stay and one may be justified in hoping that the proud yet patient Lithuanian saying, *Kasbus tasbus bet Lietuvis ne prazus*—What will be, will be, but Lithuania will remain—is to be true of all three of the new Republics.

All their people ask is to be allowed to work out their

own destiny in their own fashion. What they have accomplished in five years is, as I have tried to show, little short of marvellous: for it must never be forgotten that their progress and achievements cannot be measured by the standards of other European countries. They began with nothing—with less than nothing. Their handicap in the world's tournament was something like owe-fifty. Yet they are proving themselves before the world. They have had much to learn. They have not been too proud to learn—and they are learning still. After seven hundred years their people own the land. Once more their fields are under the plough. Once more their cattle range their meadows. Their industries are recovering, their trade increasing year by year. Their Governments are sound. Their budgets balance. And all this has been done by the sheer indomitable spirit of races that refused to own failure or defeat.

I remember very well as I walked round the great Halliste flax factory, whose capital is £15,000, asking my friend Pastor Lattik if the manager were Estonian.

"He is an Estonian, yes," replied Mr. Lattik. "And the son of a peasant." He glanced at the Headmaster of the Girls' School who was with us. "I too am the son of a peasant," he added, with a thoughtful smile.

The Headmaster nodded gravely in assent.

"We are all sons of peasants," he said simply.

That is their achievement. They are all sons of peasants and yet they have brought their countries to prosperity and have laid the foundations of what must be—so long as they are left alone—a happy future.

As Dr. Kallas once said to me: "We people of the Baltic ask but one thing: Keep peace in the world so that we may help ourselves and so help others too in time."

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